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*Through the American Lenses*









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***THROUGH THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE***

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WASHINGTON, D. C.

VIRGINIA

NORTH CAROLINA

SOUTH CAROLINA

GEORGIA

FLORIDA

ALABAMA

MISSISSIPPI

LOUISIANA

TEXAS

NEW MEXICO

ARIZONA

CALIFORNIA

NEVADA

UTAH

COLORADO

KANSAS

IOWA

MINNESOTA

WISCONSIN

ILLINOIS

INDIANA and MICHIGAN

OHIO

*Through the*

*American*

*Landscape*

By

K A J K L I T G A A R D

Chapel Hill

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Pen and ink chapter headings by the author

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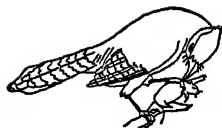
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*THROUGH THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE*

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## SETTING OUT

"IN UNDERTAKING this trip for the purpose of seeing the country's farflung landscape and considering the painters that have interpreted it, I find myself handicapped," I said.

"Handicapped?" she asked.

"Handicapped, for instance, by a mistrust of the expediency in singling out a couple of individual painters for evaluating all others."

"That has been done with some success," she said.

"Yes, with success to the painters that were chosen as a measure for the country's art," I answered, "but I doubt any other good came of it. I don't think it brought the student nearer to an understanding of art's message and function, or to a greater enjoyment of painting as a whole. If my evaluation of a canvas is to be valid, I shall have to find a touchstone other than another canvas."

She turned to her easel: "What you will bring back from your trip will probably be another autobiography," she said benevolently, to which I answered that when Professor Picard sent a thermometer into the stratosphere and it brought back its reac-

## SETTING OUT

tion to the temperature up there, Professor Picard could call it the thermometer's autobiography if he liked.

We said good-bye, and I set out through the American landscape to register such temperatures as prevail where artists foregather.

From the Chinese I have learned to enter, and to walk about in and completely to lose myself within a landscape painting. And it seems that those paintings within which I have so walked, afterwards have enabled me to see that particular aspect of the earth from which the painter drew his inspiration, in terms of that same painter, and I doubt if a landscape anywhere can be seen better than in terms of artists who have thus loved it, identified themselves with it, and come to understand it.

Some there are who will stand looking at a vista—completely sink themselves into it until its harmonies permeate them and finally force them to put down a line—a symbol—on their paper. They are less themselves then, and more the agonized mean of that which makes it imperative for society to sharpen its perception and become aware of its environment and of its universe.

An hour before sunset the slanting light rays will begin to put new color onto the earth. This is the golden hour of the landscape painter. Delight and agony. A Jacob's fight with color: I will not let you go unless you bless me!

Once I crossed the Atlantic on a steamer whose sole library consisted of an old *National Geographic* featuring Amsterdam—Amsterdam being the first city on the continent I intended to visit. I studied the excellent photographs with some care, and when I came to Amsterdam I much regretted having done so, for I found myself unable to see the elm-bordered canals and the old houses in other terms than those of the camera, and seeing

things thus is the last thing I wish. If I cannot see a foreign land in terms of its native painters, I do not wish to see it in the impersonal terms of camera work.

From the upper-deck of a canal steamer between Amsterdam and Alkmar I was able to look over the dykes at the Dutch summer landscape, when suddenly it struck me that it was Van Gogh's subjects I was looking at: his blue sky; his sky lark; his tumultuous white cumulus clouds; his lock-gates, and his wheat fields waved through by the wind. The sunflowers, manifest everywhere, were like a signature of the master. The reason I was thus able to appreciate Holland was that while in Amsterdam I had steeped myself in Van Gogh's paintings at the Rijksmuseum and at Laren.

During the winter of 1918 I was stationed in a little Belgian village and one day I took the trolley to Brussels and visited the National Art Gallery. It was particularly the Breughels I wanted to look at; it was in particular his *Child Murder in Bethlehem* I wanted to see again: a Flemish village covered with snow.

When I returned to my quarters next day, I found snow had fallen during the night. Everything flat was white, and up through it reached the black, naked trees. The intervening three or four centuries had done nothing to Breughel's interpretation, and I wrote his name in the snow, as he had forgotten to sign the picture.

In this manner I have seen silver-rimmed storm clouds cover the moon as El Greco saw them. Sunsets over the foggy docks of Turner's London. Dusk over the pastures of Brittany, and high noon over Venice as Guardi and Canaletto in their turn saw it—and now I was setting out to see if the United States could similarly be seen in terms of its painters.

Painting, indeed, is not the only art within which one can

## SETTING OUT

travel. For a trip into what sounds like Africa these few lines of a poem will take you there. I saw them in a New York paper long ago, and to my recollection they run as follows:

*The fleet gazelle eats growing grass.*

*The lion eats the fleet gazelle.*

*Time marches on. The seasons pass.*

*The lion stalks through asphodel.*

*. . . wind and water work their . . .*

*. . . . . their chemistry.*

*On lions' graves the grass is green,*

*And shy gazelles graze daintily. . . .*

This mangled version is owing to my faulty memory. The dots indicate words and a name I have forgotten, while the Roman type is a second growth supplied by me, a "burl" as they call it on the redwood trees in California—the whole thing something which instantaneously enables me to flee a dull environment. My thanks for it to whoever wrote it.

But I am concerned with painting now, and as I sit here writing, I see on the wall in front of me a *Landscape with Blooming Tree* within which I have often walked, and as my notes begin in June, I shall set out through it, as Alice set out through the looking-glass.

The Catskill landscape as I have come to know the valley that stretches from Phoenicia to Kingston, and the best part of which is called Bearsville, I see below me morning after morning with the sun coming up at the end of it—and although not a painter I reach for it and want to paint it. That is what Edvard Grieg calls *Morning Mood*, and if you listen you can hear the

brittle young sun rays spring over the horizon with the sound of his opening bars.

There are four main valleys below the ledge where I stand: one for each season, and innumerable in between; wherefore it is like the sea: never twice the same, when you have come to know it, which means you never completely can come to know it. The valley has a way of veiling itself in mists after heavy rains or during a thaw, and the wind has a way of playing with these mists, and the sun a way of illuminating them. But if it happens to be the full moon shining, it is the *Erlikönig* and his daughters dancing.

If a painter paints these moving mists and the pine trees appearing and disappearing among them, the critics are apt to say it is Chinese influence, for no critic ever comes into the mountains after heavy rains or during a thaw. They know mists from Chinese painting only.

I have walked over the Bearsville landscape, its fields and roads, and I have travelled through its essence on canvas at all seasons. It was June now, but it was a winter memory that preoccupied me as I set out, something Audubon might have sketched into a Catskill winter scene: I had come walking over the road in January, where the snow plough had thrown a wall five feet high to both sides. Everything horizontal was white, and the dark verticals looked reddish in the late winter sun. Then, as a whimsy by the painter, and I don't know from where, a mouse came running over the road. I stood still. The little bit of brown life was lost between the high snow banks, and I speculated on how I could help it. But I was not the only one who had seen it. A jay (*popinjay* the children call them because of their fantastic crest, the blue on their wings, the insane look in their eye, and the raucous cry they have for scaring the cat away from the gar-

## SETTING OUT

bage trench)—a jay had spied the little warm lump moving over the snow, and instinct or past experience told it here was *gefundnes Fressen*. I heard the whirr of its wings before I saw it. It seized the mouse amid a flutter of feathers. The little rodent squealed as it was being carried into the black and white apple orchard, and while it was there being transmuted into blue pop-injay, I continued on my way remembering the incident in terms of an Audubon lithograph.

But it was June, and I looked about me and saw the landscape this early summer morning according to what some folks call “the Woodstock school of painting” and as such it looked good to me. I was a passenger in a brand new Ford with a top that could be laid down when I wished to feel part of the scene, as a man on horseback might feel part of it. As we drove out of the Catskills and struck the broad cement, my seventeen-year-old companion and chauffeur, Peter, set the speed up to 50 m.p.h. I didn’t mind. It was early in the morning, and there was no traffic; I was myself in a hurry to get out of New York and southward, and as we proceeded I felt part of the surroundings. For a shiny new car to be part of the surroundings, it has to go the speed limit, and the surroundings have to be four-lane cement garnished with road signs and filling stations. “This,” as a painter said to me about the approach to Dallas, Texas, “can’t be painted—until somebody comes along and does it.” The dash was his, and by drawing it out he brought home to me that anything can be painted, when the right man comes to do it. I shall come back to that subject.

I find it hard to be unsympathetic towards painting, even to the work of amateurs. “Rank amateurs,” some people call them. I find it hard also to be unsympathetic towards professionals, even when they symbolize on huge walls ideas of which they

have scant knowledge and no particular love.—People have to live and make the most of opportunities.

The human psyche, I have been told, is in a kind of Cardanic suspension (like a ship's compass) which makes it think itself always on the level. That, in fact, it has to think itself so in order to function. The prime minister's soul is in Cardanic suspension, and the gangster's soul functions to his needs, and if you come upon the most obviously inferior painter working along the uninspired lines of a dead school in his best academic manner, and you tell him he is out of date, no good, and not on the level, he will laugh off the two first, but with the third you will hurt him—and so will you hurt the surrealist, the non-objectivist, or the follower of any other school you can mention. They are all on the level, albeit on different planes.

In the present decade of the twentieth century, impressionism is perhaps what Lewis Mumford calls a Survival, and in this connection I have heard non-objective painting consider itself a Mutation, and abstractionism labeled a Recessive—while a kind of painting which never came under any of the above misleading and overlapping heads since man first employed it in putting a mammoth on a cave wall, is, has been, and will ever be the Dominant.

The apple trees of Pennsylvania had shed their bloom and sprouted this year's green leaves, and the coloring of the landscape was light and tender as we drove south along the Kittatiny mountains and came through one happy Eilshemius after another, until we stopped at his Delaware Watergap as it recalled itself from the Metropolitan Museum.

I had been through this country earlier in the spring when the green young grass by the roadside had been full of newly-



## SETTING OUT

coined dandelions, millions of them; and if there is a lovelier sight in the world, I don't know where to look for it. The apple trees had stood ready to unfold their bloom at the slightest sign from the sun. Nice, gentle trees. By walking around them I was able to see them on all their backgrounds, and I recall comparing them to European nations and American cities and liking them better. For even if they have been endowed with a will to be fruitful and cover the temperate zone with their genus, strife is not their main expression, but bloom to attract insects, and green leaves to digest the sun's rays, and as a result they become heavy with fruit. Even in winter with snow on their branches they look better than a breadline or even a city parade.

I have learned that if I am in a setting, be it city or country, that hasn't been pointed out to me by art, I see it only as my own native inability to see it otherwise than a gray, everyday stage allows me to see it. The actors on the stage can be seen through the jolly glasses of Shaw or the darker ones of O'Neill, all according to one's humor. Personally I prefer to see them in the easy light in which they see themselves: generous, coöperative, understanding, and grown-up—and yet at times with a grain of doubt in their own perfection, which might oblige a spectator to take off his glasses and meet them backstage. Yet sometimes not.

Not long ago I came to Pennsylvania with a Federal Art Project exhibition of paintings which I had been permitted to choose myself. It was an outdoor exhibition, and in a certain town the mayor allowed me to set up my show on the green in front of the courthouse. Having done so, I looked around at the people who came to see the pictures. Among them a gentleman in a checkered suit was entertaining some ladies and mincingly demonstrating what he thought were the points in the different paintings. His favorite was my *Stepping Stone to an Improved*

*Art Appreciation*, the pink clouds and pretty trees of which a little girl in a previous audience had called "spun sugar."

With the collection I had brought along an abstraction, for even though my audiences were suspicious of modern art expressions, they asked to have them explained, and I had taken this particular canvas along mainly for demonstration purposes.

The la-di-da in the checkered suit denounced it vociferously, and, in spite of my remarks about the lack of point in looking for representation in a sample of linoleum or a bathroom rug, kept asking: "But what is the idea?" I answered: "The painter here has not been concerned with representation. His object has been to make a pleasing and unified pattern of abstract shapes and arbitrarily chosen color within the limits of his frame."

He laughed again, and looked, and shook his head—when it dawned on me that he was getting a great amount of pleasure and stimulus from contemplating this canvas. For looking at it he saw—not anything pertaining to the painter—but, as if in a pool reflected, his own wit and intellect, and Narcissus-like he greeted it with laughter, for laughter—in its last analysis—is man's "Hail fellow!" to beauty, and beauty—in this instance—was the wit and intellect that had carried him unscathed through life.

"That fellow is nuts!" he said leveling a finger at the abstraction and referring to the painter. But to me it was exactly as though he spoke about the reflection in the pool.

As a speed of 50 m.p.h. doesn't lend itself to contemplating behavior in anybody but the occupants of the car, I turned to Peter: "What do you think of the landscape here in Pennsylvania as compared with that of home?"

Keeping his eyes on the road he answered: "They seem to care more for their trees here,"—which observation could be defended.

## SETTING OUT

tion to the temperature up there, Professor Picard could call it the thermometer's autobiography if he liked.

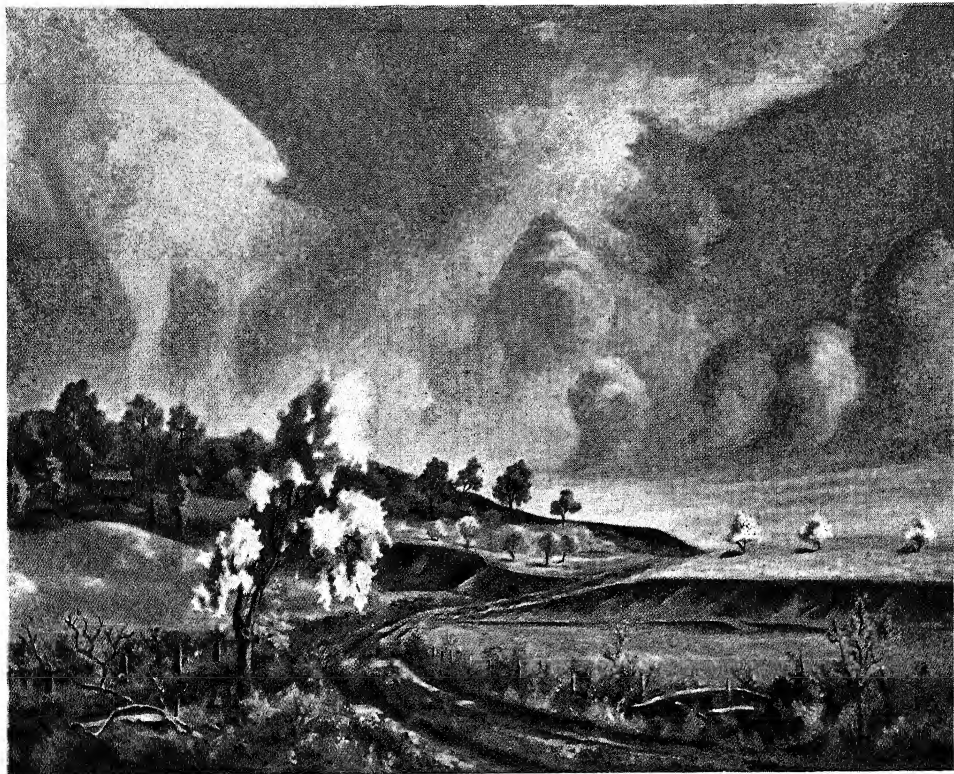
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Some there are who will stand looking at a vista—completely sink themselves into it until its harmonies permeate them and finally force them to put down a line—a symbol—on their paper. They are less themselves then, and more the agonized mean of that which makes it imperative for society to sharpen its perception and become aware of its environment and of its universe.

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Once I crossed the Atlantic on a steamer whose sole library consisted of an old *National Geographic* featuring Amsterdam—Amsterdam being the first city on the continent I intended to visit. I studied the excellent photographs with some care, and when I came to Amsterdam I much regretted having done so, for I found myself unable to see the elm-bordered canals and the old houses in other terms than those of the camera, and seeing



*Landscape with Blooming Tree*  
[Oil]

GEORGINA KLITGAARD



tabloids. Photography for art's sake is a thing it isn't given me to see, and seeing things as the camera sees them, is something I shall fight against as long as still life, landscape, and the human figure can be expressed in the medium of paint and a human temperament—and my proof of this particular pudding is, that I would rather look at the subject than at its photograph, which I can't always say for its rendering in paint. I walked past these, looking for sailing ships and pretty nudes, and finding some or none, came into a room where hung Rembrandt's *Man with Red Cap*.

Here also was a comprehensive exhibition of Jacob Epstein's work, lent or donated from the collection of another Jacob Epstein. Quite a coincidence! Art collecting starts at times from the funniest motives. There is a story about a Frenchman who suddenly found himself in possession of a valuable collection of signatures from Renoir to Picasso, all on paintings representing Pont Argenteuil. This man wasn't interested in art as such, but he loved Pont Argenteuil and whenever a painter set up to paint it, this man bought the picture on the easel. One imagines an appealing vista—or else that the young foxes of Paris looked upon the bridge as a tree in which *Maitre Corbeau sur un arbre perché*. . . .

In March they had had an exhibition of modern Baltimore painters here, which, of course, I missed, albeit I was shown reproductions of their work. In conglomerate shows of modern work I find in many places some awareness of color, but a slighting of drawing or perhaps a fundamental inability to draw, owing, presumably, to lack of knowledge of the anatomy of men, landscape, and machinery; or perhaps to unsharpened perception, or to laziness, or to lack of interest.

Nowhere is it written that a drawing should be anatomically

## SETTING OUT

correct, or that one cannot be an artist if one cannot draw, or that a picture is no good if it is out-of-drawing. In fact, nothing has been written except we wrote it ourselves, and because lines form words they need to be no truer than lines forming human bodies, even though those bodies be out-of-drawing.

The above, to be sure, may also be used as an excuse by a person who can't draw and who has nothing to say, and therein lies the danger of such reasoning. On the whole it is difficult, not to say impossible, to point at uncontradictabilia. Once when I was a kid my father told me about an artist, who, he said, would be of the Royal Academy if only he could paint his tree trunks round. But he couldn't. Look at any one of his pictures: tree trunks flat as boards!

That was many years ago. Since then art has become free, and a painting unacceptable to one academy will be acceptable to another, or start itself a brand new one. That which forty years ago was a handicap to a painter is to-day an asset expressing personality, and a something which in the hands of the right dealer can make the painter famous and the public stand on its ear—and who is to say the public should not?

As I remarked: it is hard to point the way. Yet there are people who can't be fooled much, and those are the ones to go to for evaluation. And if you ask me who they are, I'll tell you: it's yourself. You'll have to go up to a picture and say: "I don't know anything about art, but I know what I like." That is what it resolves itself into, and on the whole it is not so bad, provided you are not tied up in art theories and think you are lying to yourself when you say it.

Jean Jacques Rousseau's "natural man" looking at art will come up to the most abstract of abstractions, and if it subscribes to the laws of the universe, and if he is left alone, he will instinc-

tively be thrilled by what he sees, although he will not be able to give his reason for being so thrilled. The seagull, knowing nothing of aero-dynamics, hangs suspended, a white cross on the blue sky.

Around the western world sit a number of people bemoaning the fact that they have to unlearn a lot of training before they can become their own uncontaminated selves. Yet, what would they have been if they never had had their perception sharpened in some kind of school? Modern primitives, perhaps, but being primarily moaners, the chances are they would have bemoaned their lack of schooling: "With a little training we could have been the Rembrandts of our day."

However, as I look at some of my own pictures—the praise of which has always made me doubt the critical faculties of the appraiser—I seem to realize that had not a respect for exact representation, of which I was never capable, been so fundamentally instilled in me during my childhood, I might have become a painter myself, and even an artist. Man should trust in his own sense of beauty, as he trusts in his own sense of equilibrium.







I HAD been to Washington early in the spring to see in bloom the cherry trees Japan gave us.

Japan? Among my possessions I have a picture I cut out of a magazine showing a Japanese ambassador and his aide posing on the steps of the White House with some sort of uniformed United States attaché. I have often looked at that picture with a feeling of foreboding: the two little self-contained Japs posing non-committally—microbes biding their time. And the uniformed, supercilious nonentity with them—handsome and tall, a bottle of expensive, ineffectual gargle. Looking at this picture—cherry trees or no—I cannot help but sympathize with China's wish to see this Island Empire slide off the continental shelf and sink into Kuro Shiwo.

I presume the Jap who suggested we be given the trees thought of us as strolling under their branches and writing poetry to their bloom. But we drive about in closed cars unable to do anything but realize they are there and that we haven't been lied to. Some of us prefer to take photographs of cherry trees, though, to monuments put up in their place.

In June the bloom had gone and the fruit hadn't yet ripened,

## WASHINGTON, D.C.

if it ever does. I didn't miss anything, for when seeing the bloom or when recalling it, it is a colored postcard someone sent me that I see and recall. Besides, I hadn't come to Washington to look at cherry trees or monuments, but to see what the country's artists had done with the spaces allotted to them by the Treasury in the Post Office and Department of Justice buildings—but the Washington monument sidetracked me.

At night this obelisk is light-flooded, and even if there is a touch of sentimentality and advertising about the sight, the obelisk shape is here suspended luminous in dark space. It might make the spectator realize some of the reflexes that stir within the non-objective painter's mind, and make him wonder: who discovered the cube, the cylinder, the sphere, the pyramid, the cone? Who invented the obelisk? Have we, in our civilization, discovered any geometrical form as fine? Or any at all? Does that mean no more exist? Or does it merely mean that ours is not the kind of civilization to discover them?

On the obelisk's top has been placed a red light; a necessary warning to airplanes, I reasoned in an effort to apologize for it, for I doubt if an artist, or even an architect, could have put it there for fun.

Whatever they have done here, it is as nothing compared to what they are doing to an obelisk in Texas. There, to commemorate Houston's victory over Santa Anna, an obelisk is being erected, the smallest bit taller than the one here, and on top of it they are putting a huge star.

"Yes," they repeated, "a star." And being a visitor to Texas I said no more.

Inside, the obelisk is going to be decorated with murals, I was further told, and Howard Chandler Christy has been appointed to do it.

"Who appointed him? Not the Procurement Division?"

No, no! Washington had nothing to do with it. A Texan, a Jesse somebody had appointed him.

"Wasn't that a famous gunman?"

I had repeated the name incorrectly and was instructed. He was one of the Washington Shiva's many right-hand arms.

"Shiva?" I had to laugh. "You talk like a Republican. His name is Brahma. You might at least call him Vishnu."

I drove to Washington's new Post Office and the new Department of Justice building to look at the mural paintings recently installed there. It was a sunshiny day, and the drive down Constitution Avenue was a reassuring experience. The big façades of the triangle reflecting the noonday sun, the stars and stripes flying above them, the blue sky with now and then an airplane—all tending to make the citizen feel reassured and satisfied with his capital.

Coming inside I looked at the murals, first in one building and then in the other, and it is my contention that the country has got that which Edward Bruce said it set out to get: "*The best available American Art for public buildings*" that was possible under the circumstances. When it was decided that murals were to be painted for these spaces, and the best of the country's artists were known less for their mural and more for their easel work, a committee of experts was appointed to make a start by selecting painters for the jobs. That the experts didn't then have the knowledge at evaluating mural painters which competitions and experience with actual murals might have given later, and that there are some who don't agree with their choice, is neither here nor there. The experts' guess had more validity than anybody else's. If mural painters have since arisen superior to those chosen by the experts, it only proves that when faced with an

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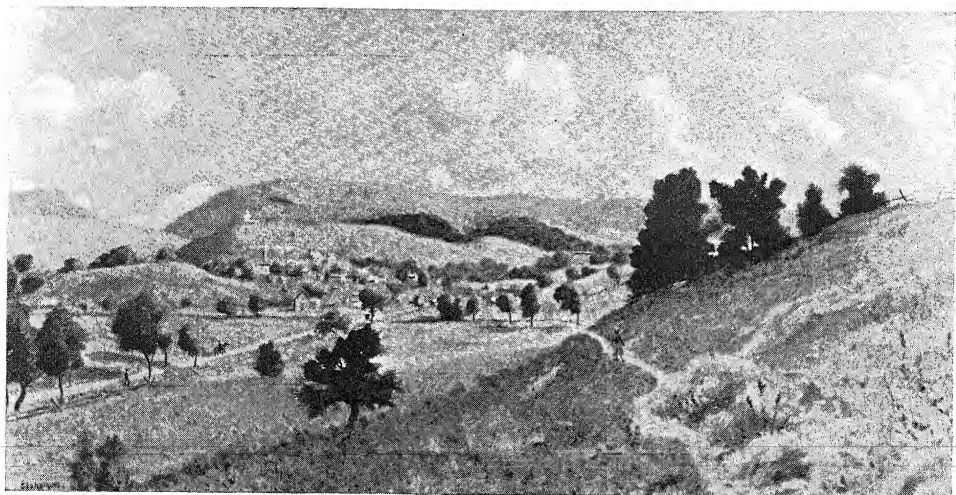
emergency the country refused to let the horse die while the grass grew.

It has been suggested that although the painter is getting a far wider audience for his work by painting a mural for a public building than he can hope to get by painting an easel picture, he nevertheless will not have to paint "down" to his audience. *"It might mean, however, that logic (the painter's) will demand the use of symbols which are both simpler and broader in appeal."*

Considering that Giotto's murals owe their great appeal to simplicity and broadness, the above is a good point to make. But there is also the public's logic to exercise: Should the public not be made to realize that the artist is not only the exponent of symbols, but the creator of symbols for his day? There is no logic in the What-was-good-enough-for-my-father attitude retaining its stand in art longer than in other commodities—although I wouldn't recommend the absolute negation of it that one finds in the realm of automobiles.

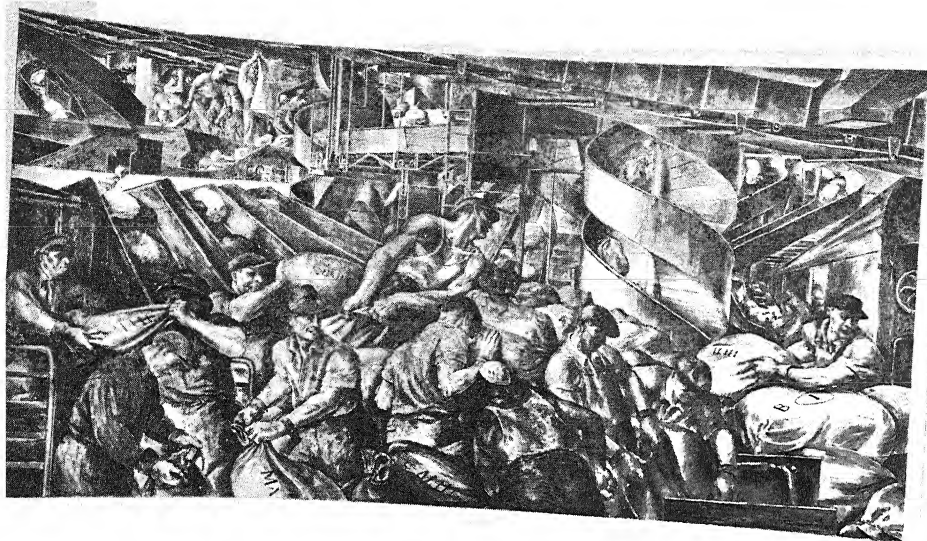
The above and the following quotations are from Forbes Watson's comprehensive preface to *Mural Designs*, vol. 1. Bruce and Watson. Published by Art in Federal Buildings, Inc., Washington, D.C.

*"The declining of a common religion did not necessarily mean that each individual lost faith in the universe and in his fellowmen. Art teaches us that the lack of a mass faith occasionally produced an individual belief all the more obstinate for its lack of community support. In this process faith became more individualized. Art followed a similar course until by the time painting had reached the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it had become increasingly a means whereby the artist expressed his own personal wonder, rather than the wonder shared by the community."*



*Delaware Water Gap Village*  
[Oil]

EILSHEMIUS



*Sorting Mail*  
[Fresco]

REGINALD MARSH

The reason for the community's failure to share the artist's wonder seems to be due to a preoccupation on the community's part—in one way or the other—with the hurried tempo of industrial civilization. There is, just the same, a new kind of wonder cropping up in the community, and there are artists to share it: Archibald MacLeish in his *Land of the Free* is one, and there is the whole school of social scene painters symbolizing the people's wonder at want in the midst of plenty.

" . . . *his own personal wonder*. . . ." Among the murals in the Post Office building I stood a long time before two that expressed a wonder at a landscape I had never seen. They seemed to refer to western skies. I knew I was going there. Should I be able to approach them through these paintings, and to wonder as this painter had? Among the rest of the murals they looked wild and untamed and exciting, and while I considered chasing them I considered also the possibility that they might be wild geese.

I have heard the opinion stated that murals in public buildings might better not be intimate paintings full of observation and attitudes. They might better be abstractions or even non-objective decorations in tune with the architecture and functions of the building—and on seeing the abstract fresco decorations on the "Masterpieces of Art" building at the New York Worlds Fair, I couldn't but agree, at least in that instance.

I have also heard abstract and "futuristic" murals recommended for banks and office buildings, where people hurry in and out as they do not do in churches and auditoriums—and the argument advanced is that the public has become accustomed to having the time element at work in whatever is presented to it visually.

Last winter I drove to New York City with the Woodstock



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painter Henry Mattson. I was driving and he was talking about the time element in art. "Speed," he called it.

"Speed?" I said, driving. "How can you have speed in a painting?"

Tossing his thumb over his shoulder, he asked: "Did you see that sign?"

It was a road sign saying "Slow."—"I'm going thirty-five," I said.

He smiled. "Yes—but it didn't say: 'Won't you please go slow'—and when you come to an Esso station it says 'Esso'—it doesn't say: 'Wont you please stop here and buy a little Esso?'—Did you see that tree?"

"Yes."

"Did you see how many branches it had?"

"—"

"You didn't. You just saw it had branches. Now, when Vlaminck paints a landscape, he puts in a tree, like this, a stroke." Henry Mattson drew a line on the windshield in imitation of Vlaminck painting a tree. "Then he puts in more strokes—branches—and there is his tree, and in that manner he has put into his painting: *Speeed*. That's what I meant by speed in painting. We might be as conscientious about our work as the old masters and spend as much time on a canvas—but we can't use their symbols. People are going too fast to read them."

Through that incident I was put on a track where I have been able to explain to myself more adequately one trend in modern painting, and often on my trip throughout the country, when I shot by a red and white filling station, I had to agree with Stuart Davies putting relativity into art. He had made an abstraction once of such a filling station. No more abstract though, than 50 m.p.h. makes it to a man in a car.

But the wall paintings in Washington are monuments to our social faith and expressions of the American dream, which visitors may enjoy at their leisure. The public at times wants respite from the time element.

What strikes me most when I compare the murals in the above buildings with those in the Library of Congress and the Capitol—aside from the independence of the first from Renaissance symbolism—is their improvement in color. There is, however, a detail from the dome in the Capitol of which I am very fond—though admitting it might invalidate my claim to be counted among the experts, for the man who made it has by another expert been called, “the Italian tradition of mural painting at the lowest level of its decay.”

It is a fresco by Brumidi, who, imported from Italy, painted murals for our government at ten dollars a day plus extras. Forbes Watson, in reflecting on American painters of that time says: *“One cannot help wondering what might have happened in the history of American painting if native innocence had been given an equal opportunity with foreign sophistication.”*

I share Mr. Watson’s wonder, but I don’t think Signor Brumidi is sophisticated. The group I refer to shows King Neptune with his trident, riding on two white sea-horses and surrounded by mermaids and cherubim. What particularly fetches me in this group is a ferryboat crawling over the horizon to the rear, and the way in which the parallelism in Neptune’s curls has been carried into cherub’s garment, cherub’s fingers, Neptune’s fingers, and into a large seashell. The group is as innocuous as a cigar store Indian, and a thing any sailor would love to have tattooed on his chest. . . . As for the quality of the fresco materials, the Italian seems to have known all there is to know.

Travelling about the country I gathered that there are two

schools of fresco painting to-day: the new or quick, and the old or slow. Both schools insist on the importance, not only of preparing carefully the surface on which they are to paint, but of applying equally carefully the several different layers of plaster below it, and of being very careful as to how they mix the plaster.

On the whole, fresco painting seems to be a difficult job. As Reginald Marsh, who painted the frescos in the New York City custom house, told me: "The plasterers will come early in the morning, and if it weren't for the unions, even earlier, and lay on the coat on which the fresco is to be painted. They will plaster seven or eight square feet, whereupon the artist will transfer his drawing to the piece, and lay in first his monochrome, and then his tints. This takes half a day, and during the afternoon hours the color will sink in and die lustreless. But about five o'clock in the afternoon the color will come back and begin to glow, and now comes what the fresco painter knows as 'the golden hour' during which the lustre of the color takes possession of him, and during which he makes the work he'll want to stand."

Where the two schools differ is on the subject of time it should take to finish a fresco. One will say that a year and a half is plenty for a mural of nine hundred square feet. The other will say that five years is none too much.

Comparing the tempo of to-day with that of the Middle Ages, one sees readily how the "quick" school is more acceptable to the twentieth century activities that are to occupy the rooms in which a modern fresco is to go. Having scaffolding with screens and standards for artificial light, etc. littering an entrance hall in a public building for two years with the prospect of having it there for as many more, will eventually annoy the head of whatever activity takes place in the building. "He is like the captain

of a liner," said Marsh, fetching a simile from a realm where we both were acquainted. "He won't have his gangway littered—and Mr. Goldman, the postmaster of the New York post office on Seventh Avenue felt that way about Rico Lebrun, and complained to Washington."

With one thing and another the outcome was that Lebrun finished only one of the three frescos of three hundred square feet each, that he had been commissioned to do in the lobby of the N.Y.P.O. under the T.R.A.P.

When meeting Lebrun in Santa Barbara, California, I asked him about his fresco in the N.Y.P.O. He told me he had followed an unusually elaborate and trying routine. He had come from two generations of fresco painters, and as a child in Italy had worked on frescos before he knew what frescos were. His method employed in the post office had taxed the Government's patience and funds, as well as his own, and he had been made to feel apologetic for a procedure which was the direct result of only personal integrity. He had been paid twenty-five dollars per week, but had spent \$3500 of his own money while on the job, and had given up a teaching position that paid him \$200 a month, because he believed in the Government's interest in art, and wanted to work for it. He had made about five hundred preparatory drawings for the murals, including three actual sized cartoons 32' x 9'.

"The only reference the Washington bureau had to oppose my standard," he said, "was the one of frescos done in this country by men, who in my sincere opinion, have achieved much less than their innate and unquestionable artistry might have produced, if the element of complete preparation had been adopted.

"It is probably through the fast method of approach and de-

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livery that the pony-expressionism of Federal Art has produced so much dead and boring *Peinture d'Histoire*."

What could I say? When I came back to New York I went to look at Lebrun's fresco in the N.Y.P.O. It showed flood victims on a raft, and railroad cars. There were spots on it. Workmen, when replastering the spaces where Lebrun's other murals were to have gone, had splashed mortar on it and tried to take it off with varnish remover, he had told me.

I went upstairs to interview the Postmaster, Mr. Goldman, and hear what he had to say about it, but I got no further than to his assistant, Mr. Lupin. Mr. Lupin was a giant—a man of Gargantuan proportions, with a genial smile and a sense of humor. He had seen Lebrun's fresco when the scaffolding finally had been removed, but knew otherwise nothing about it. "What has a flood got to do with a post office?" he asked.

I didn't say. "Have you seen the murals in the Washington D.C. triangle?" I asked.

Had he? He threw up his hands. "Anemic! Anemic!—all the people in them are dying of consumption!" (Could he mean George Biddle? I wondered.)

"I suppose anybody who doesn't look like Gargantua looks anemic to you," I said.

He laughed at that.

"I suppose you liked the murals you saw in the Library of Congress?" I said.

"Ah!" Mr. Lupin lay back in his chair. "Ah!"

"Don't you think," I said, "that we are at all under an obligation to be in step with our time? In art as well as in automobiles? Those Library of Congress murals date as does the horse and buggy, and as will eventually your streamlined car."

He laughed from Olympus: "Ha! Ha! Ha!—That is good!—

Michelangelo horse and buggy!—The Sistine Chapel horse and buggy!—That is capital!” He was transported with the idea, and when big Goliath thus leads with the chin, little David finds it hard to desist.

“No,” I whispered. “Michelangelo is not horse and buggy, and the frescos in the Sistine Chapel are as timeless as the horse. But in the Library of Congress they have put a buggy behind the horse, and you would rather ride in that buggy than consider an art expression meant for a present-day intelligence. Such an attitude hampers true advancement of culture.”

Mr. Lupin thought. Then he sat up and called a man in the next room, who came and who was introduced. “Now,” said Mr. Lupin, “you have seen those post office murals in Washington. Tell Mr. Klitgaard what you thought of them.”

The newcomer waved a vision away with his hands: “Prize fighters!” he exclaimed. “Muscles! If we had men like that in the service we could get the work done!” (Could he mean Alfred D. Crimi? I wondered.)

Mr. Lupin interrupted: “No, no! They were anemic! Don’t you remember? Anemic!”

“Well, this has been very pleasant,” I said, and as I took the elevator down I mused on man’s (in this case my own) ability to use words so that their implication would silence another man as though they were the truth. I didn’t think the horse was timeless. I saw the Sistine frescos rather as did St. Fenimore’s protégé. I loved Neptune in the Library of Congress, and I think some of the murals in the triangle as ill considered as murals can be. And as for the new and quick or old and slow method of painting frescos today: considering the life of a New York post office to be sixty-five years, the former of the two techniques seems to me the more reasonable.

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I drove to the airport where I had left Peter some hours before. Big passenger planes were coming and going continually, and among them an autogyro kept taking people up for hire. I saw him sitting, chin in hand, gazing at the planes, as years ago I had sat gazing at sailing ships. The night before we had been to a movie called *Test Pilot*, in which the air had been denounced in the way I had heard the sea denounced when I set out: "The blue woman, who kills her lovers."—The same old song—the mother's song.

"Do you want to come and see the Phillips Memorial Collection?" I asked.

"Paintings?"

"Yes."

"No."

"O.K.—I'll come back for you in a couple of hours"; whereupon I went to the Phillips Memorial Gallery and the Corcoran Gallery alone.

In looking at art, I had made up my mind to limit myself to painting, and from paintings to single out landscapes, and of these to give my attention to those of the American scene painted by American artists only. The last clause hadn't been necessary, for no foreign artist has painted the American scene, except it might be said he has done so through the medium of an *élève*.

Nevertheless, when I came into the Phillips Memorial Gallery, from which all daylight had been excluded by blinds, it was with a feeling of profound gratitude I sank into a deep leather chair in front of an artificially lit *St. Peter* by El Greco, and kept sitting here for some time. Emerging from this mute, incommunicable experience, I looked around for something in my memory to compare it to, that I might communicate it anyway and say: "It is like——" But I could think of nothing.



*Early Summer*  
[Oil]

HENRY MATTSON





To the left of me was another spot-lighted *St. Peter*—head thrown back in strange foreshortening. Goya. It's *thauma* helped release me from that of the first. I was the only person in the room. Possibly in the whole building. I saw no other people.

I came in among walls dedicated to Daumier and where hung *The Sculptor*. Looking at it I wanted to write a book about two such men as were here depicted, for in this canvas Daumier has shown man as God might have intended him. Near by hung another, called *The Rocket*, in which commonplace, rather stupid faces have been imbued with a touch of Godliness from looking at fireworks. If anybody had told me my face looked like those, as I walked here looking at paintings, I should have known I was happy to walk here. Knowing that I was happy to walk here, I knew my face looked like those in the picture, and it can look worse.

Upstairs in daylit rooms hung many spring landscapes and quite a number of them Eilshemius from the days before he put an *i* into the first syllable of his name. There is something tricky about Eilshemius' paintings. You see them from the door, or from across the room: "Ah!" you think, "an A. B. or a C."—and then you discover it is not A. B. or C. It is Eilshemius, and he has had some influence on the country's younger painters, one not to be regretted. At any rate, it saves us from influences from abroad.

Abroad, yes.—Some painters over there are so mannered that their painting is nothing but manner, no matter how charming the manner be.—To limit controversy, I shall confine my examples to one and mention only Dufy. He is less of an influence in western art than he is a spice. Painters feeling their work to be flat and having no savory ingredient of their own, will add a touch of Dufy to give their picture *ton*—but so not to get caught

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in their defense mechanism, one had better not mention it to them.

Paris is to art what India is to cooking, but certain spices do grow outside India. In this country I consider Marin such a spice, and many painters I know have seasoned their broth with him—perhaps as an experiment only, for I have seen men who were painters in their own rights throw more Marin than ego into a canvas. I can't make a meal of spices, and that might account for some of my preferences in art.

At the Corcoran Gallery I saw some fine examples of the Hudson River school, according to which the Hudson possesses more romantic lore than the Rhine. And one wonders if being a landscape painter in that day mustn't have been something to fill a painter's soul with peace. And perhaps you'll look up a contemporary "Life" of one of these men in the library, that you might get in on the secret of the peace exuding from these canvases. Reading a modern account of him in terms of Freud, proving him frustrated, sex-starved and mistaken in his vocation, cannot be recommended to an understanding of his work.

There is in this gallery a painting by Bierstadt called *Mount Corcoran*. It is a romantic scene from the Rockies, showing high mountains, pine woods, and a lake down to which a bear comes walking. I knew this picture was here, and made a point of going to look at it again. And I loved it as I looked, although something instilled within me, Balder, I call it, or my better ego, was trying to get me away from the indulgence. But something strongly native to me, Loki, I call it, or my worse ego, told Balder that even as the bug eaten by the nightingale might turn into song, so might whatever I get from looking at this picture turn into poetry. Cunning Loki, gullible Balder.

George Bellows' canvas here is called *Forty-two Kids*, and I

shall suggest to painters not to name their pictures from the number of people, or bottles, or what-not is in them, if they don't want the spectator to start counting and lose sight of what they really have to say.

Once more I went back on my decision not to look at anything but American landscapes. The bronzes of Barye did that. I am inordinately fond of those ferocious little paperweights, and I'd like here to insert a fable I saw in an unpublished MS belonging to a sailor lad, who long ago used to write of sea-serpents and things:

In the surface of the Mediterranean swim beautiful, lace-like bits of life, and as the ship's side glided past them, I thought of the origin of this species: while God was forming Adam, a little angel sneaked up and stole a lump of creator clay, and imitating God started to make figures. But Gabriel discovered it and threw the fantasies into the sea, where they became alive and swam away. And the little angel was taken before God and punished. According to laws I don't understand, he must from time to time put on an artist's appearance and for an age of man live among us and form animals in the clays of the earth. Thus he has been recognized as Sisshu and Barye.



"THE SOUTH" is in Danish called *Syden*, a word that in my childhood called up a foreground in which stood a tree of a kind that didn't grow in Denmark, and where lay a broken marble column on which sat a beggar "quenching his thirst with the juicy watermelon," as Hans Andersen had it. The middle distance is vague in my memory. I believe it was a bay, and in the distance lay a volcano with an umbrella of smoke above it, Vesuvius probably, and probably the whole thing is a memory of an engraving pointed out to me as *Syden* by someone who wanted to instruct me.

"The South" in America conjures up an equally charming but quite different picture: a colonial house with white columns, and with a big Aunt Jemima on the porch assuring me she is in town. Memories of advertisements, I take it, and of illustrations from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* which book, as a boy, I thought was written for girls, and which I knew only from its illustrations and from hearing my sisters lament the fate of little Eva.

I dislike having such innocent imagery spoiled by what my eyes reveal to me as "reality," but driving down through Virginia I saw no help for it. None of the country's artists had made these

trees and rolling hills sacred to me. The colonial houses at Mount Vernon and Arlington were too much under glass to fit into anything I carried with me from *Uncle Tom*. And the—in a way hallowed and ghostly—experience it was to walk in these places was historical and outside my realm.

To occupy myself during the drive I devised a game: I tried to see the Virginia landscape as this, that, or the other painter might see it, and I could do so were there but the smallest suggestion of his manner in the scene I looked at. But part of my make-up is *Zeitgeist*, which, working on my social consciousness told me that these were not "Figures in Landscape," but material for bread lines, sharecroppers, tenement dwellers, poor whites, and "niggers." They should be seen in terms of something called the Social Scene Boys, or else as that viewpoint is expugned by the papers in opposition—as long as I took a side and didn't remain what the Greeks called "an idiot, a private person."

From reading Huxley I know the warring factions all agree on the End, and that it is the Means which cause the warring. But in trying to take a side, I am never convinced the means is something from which the end might be predicted, wherefore I keep sitting on my fence, a meek spectator. Nobody seems to care, though.

None *strove with* me.

I *was worth* nobody's *strife*.

*Nature I loved*.

I tried to write of *Art*.

I tried to glean a little heat from *life*—

Got singed!

And should be *ready to depart*.

Walter Savage Landor might have been, but I am not. I was standing with my companion in our room in Richmond poring

## VIRGINIA

over a map and planning tomorrow's trek: "I am thinking of taking route 1 down to Raleigh, N.C.—I have to see a man there." I was answering his suggestion that we take route 60 to Newport News. "I have no business in Newport News."

"No, but you would be near the sea," he enlightened me. "You'd see the Atlantic Ocean."

"Yeah—I can dispense with that." For a moment I was quite touched. I really thought he was concerned about my seeing the Atlantic Ocean. "Route 1 for us!" I said laying my hand on his shoulder.

"It's the *one* chance in my life I have to see Langley Field. It's the *one* chance I'll have!" On these occasions he used italics.

"Langley Field?—where is that?"

"Right here." It is hard to withstand the tone of crushed ambition youth is able to impart to its requests. "Right here where it says, 'Langley Field. Open to Visitors.' You have been to the museum in Richmond. It's my turn now."

"*Your* turn? Do you realize on what money we are making this trip?"

"How would they know the difference?"

"*How would they know the difference???*" I too can use them. "You yourself would know!—The-man-in-the-mirror! Our social conscience!" After talking like that I give in. I agreed to take route 60 and go to Langley Field.

In Richmond we had tasted Southern hospitality. The painter Paul Rohland had told me to call on his aunt there, and had written her we were coming. When I rang the bell, the door was opened by an old lady who looked like a small and very choice edition of Schumann-Heink, and when I said so, she said she knew it. "Come in," she said, "supper is on the table." She apologized for it, saying she hadn't known exactly when to expect us.

The supper consisted of soft-shell crabs, hot biscuits, hot corn bread, salad, cheese, jam, watermelon, tea, milk, or we could have coffee if we preferred. I had heard about Southern hospitality and thought it was just something they put into books about the South, but it isn't.

This old lady had a sweet sense of humor. With an L-shaped room in her house she had made a delightful game. She had turned it into what she called "my movie star bathroom," and it was all of that, and she gave us the freedom of it. I have had my present shaving brush for over eighteen years, and I have come to take its looks for granted. Every now and again on the road I had been fondly reminded of it and thought "Phooey!" at certain roadside poetry denouncing shaving brushes. However, when I took it into Aunt Lena's streamlined bathroom and saw it reflected in three mirrors at once, it was indeed as if all the ultra-modern, aristocratic vials and powder jars began Phooey! Phooey! Phooeying that gray-haired object on the pink marble shelf.

I was shown Richmond, which until then I had known only as a name and through engravings in a book—dramatic pictures and romantic—so red the rose—and had I come here during the War Between the States, I should easily have seen it as such. What I saw now could no longer thus be seen. On my tours up and down broad streets with Aunt Lena, I saw a Richmond, in spots old, but mainly new and up-and-coming. Because you show your stockings you do not have to show the holes, and if there are any slums in Richmond, I do not know about them. Neither do I know about Niggertown, which I should like to have seen.

But I saw the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts which opened recently. Thinking I might see in paint that which I should see in



## VIRGINIA

nature on going through Virginia, I went in, but found the museum of a broader scope.

It is here *"to present to the people of the Southern American States a series of exhibitions . . . that will cover . . . the field of painting as practised today by American painters. To give the Artists of America a further competitive opportunity to gain recognition and support from an enlarged public."* Than which nothing could better be.

It was pouring rain when we left Richmond and drove towards Newport News. During a clearing we saw York River through the windows of a restaurant where we ate a highly advertised shore dinner. Reflecting on the discrepancy between the lure caterers employ to get you inside their places, and the indifferent way they cook for you and serve you when they get you there, makes you feel cheated.

In gloomy rain we crossed the James River via "the longest bridge in the world," and looking at the map I saw that to the left would lie Dismal Swamp. But preferring to retain it in my memory as:



*the old dis - mal swamp*

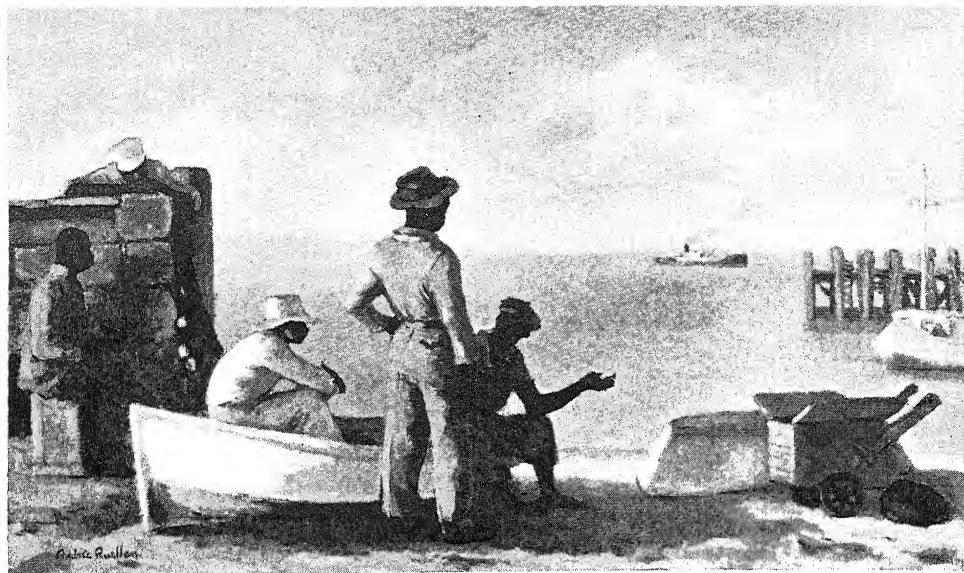
I refrained from dipping south and letting my eyes deceive me. We took route 158 to Tarboro, N.C., where we put up in an enormous house, with enormous high-ceilinged rooms, in one of which stood two enormous beds, a he and a she, the he recognizable by gilded scollops on its head and foot boards, and in which I slept and dreamt I was in a fist fight with the painter Henry Mattson.



*November*

[Water color]

JOHN W. TAYLOR



*Crabmen, Charleston*  
[Oil]

ANDREE RUELLAN

The road we had come over and the landscape we had come through during the afternoon, although flat and with big clouds, had reminded less of Ruisdael and more of Constable and Gainsborough with its overgrown, green fences. The reason I dreamt Mr. Mattson beat me up, was, that when writing my notes on the landscape in the evening, I hadn't mentioned him. There had been a moment when the horizontal sunlight struck the wet woods, and black was thrown in among the vivid greens, that I had thought of his pictures. His *fylgie*, in good Norse tradition, then called on me in my sleep and lambasted me for not saying so.



JONATHAN DANIELS of the *News and Observer*, Raleigh, N.C., in his book *A Southerner Discovers the South* says: “. . . I set forth . . . with a suitcase full of letters to the best—the very best—people . . .”

Well, so did I, and he was one of them.

Having since read his book and his penetrating, albeit somewhat uncharitable analysis of the people he encounters, I have wondered what kind of a spot *I* made on his wall, when he lifted his eyes from the paper he was reading to look at me.

However, he invited me and my companion to lunch, and as an old Guggenheim Fellow asked me how he could be of help to me.

He was helping me already. I don't mean the lunch, although that was welcome and most excellent, but by letting me touch something decidedly Southern and North Carolinian in himself. I hadn't read his book then. In fact I didn't know there was going to be one, and he didn't tell me. I had, to tell the truth, avoided reading anything that might make me judge of things beforehand, but being at the same time aware of the disadvantages in not informing myself at all about the country I was to travel

through, I had read a tourist bureau's folder on Sights to See in the United States. For Ohio it mentioned only one item: President Harding's Tomb, but it didn't try to make up my mind about it.

I told Mr. Daniels what I was after: Art in America—but added that since Washington I had caught myself somewhat losing sight of this and becoming increasingly preoccupied with the social aspect of things. I wanted to find evidence for, or refutation of the belief that policemen in the South shot the most lovable Negroes, and that one out of every so many sharecroppers was eaten by his own pigs.

"I know what you have been reading," said Mr. Daniels darkly. "That's the impression you get."

He asked me questions about my project, and I got onto thinner and thinner ice, for my project was really to fill a virgin mind—or a vast ignorance—with observation from which might be distilled—not an attitude, but an understanding of American landscape painting, which, expressed in clear language, might help others to see the American scene through the eyes of its artists.

In my attempt at formulating this, I was probably somewhat vague, for, having finished lunch, Mr. Daniels, offering me a cigarette, said: "I have as yet no idea what it is you are after."

That pained me; for if he had had, he might have told me. My own ideas at that stage were, as I said, as yet hazy. However, in self protection I had to lift my eyebrows: "Now," I said, "you have not long ago been on a similar trip. Is there any place along my route you would advise me not to miss? Is there any place where the Old South might be said to be summed up?"

"Well, wherever else you go, don't miss Natchez, Mississippi." In describing the town and what I should see, he made

## NORTH CAROLINA

me want not to miss it—and I hope at this stage of writing I shall have no reason to be sorry for not having missed it.

“Are there any poets who have described the landscape of these seaboard states that you could recommend for a deeper understanding of them?” I asked, and Mr. Daniels told me of Sidney Lanier’s “Marshes of Glynn.”

I doubted I had made the impression of the traditional writer setting out with a well defined and definite project, which I had wanted to make, and which, I thought, a newspaper editor had a right to expect. And when Mr. Daniels told me to go and look at the stone steps in the Capitol where pieces had been knocked off when the Reconstructionists rolled whisky barrels down them, I thought he told me so for my sins. I went there, and in the proper spirit looked and thought: “Just like those . . . Reconstructionists: rolling whisky barrels up these stairs for the pleasure of rolling them down again and seeing pieces fly off the steps.”

Mentioning art in North Carolina, Mr. Daniels had spoken about four murals in the State College of Agriculture and Engineering library about which there had been quite some controversy. A woman, whom I asked where they were, took a sinister delight in showing me: “There!” she said, pointing. They were right above our heads in the rotunda. “And I think they are terrible!”

“What’s the matter with them?” I asked.

“They are terrible! And they don’t go with the architecture!”

I said art didn’t stand still, and that if the college wanted murals of the period of the library, it should have had them painted when the library was built. I have seen pictures in public buildings which give the impression that the artist has thought the place not quite worthy of his powers, and who then

for the sake of harmony, has made a picture to match his idea of the surroundings. In a somewhat transported sense the murals in the library of the state college suggest the functions of a library, as in modified Rivera tradition they show men in white with microscopes, and farmers and laborers with their implements.

At the desk I asked for Sidney Lanier's "Marshes of Glynn" and sat down to read. Good rhymes and flowing lines they were, about the marshes and waters of Glynn and the life in them:

*"But who will reveal to our waking ken  
The forms that swim,  
And the shapes that creep  
Under the waters of sleep?"*

"Freud will," I thought, and took up a book of Negro songs strung like painted wooden beads on the thin string of their compiler's prose. Here also I failed to see the South as my eyes had revealed it to me coming along route 158.

Around its capitol Raleigh is laid out with residential sections in three directions, and a busy trafficked business section in the fourth, and, while we were here, the rain pouring down over everything. The road from Raleigh to Durham ran between corn and tobacco fields wet with the rain, and when the rain at times ceased we drove under a low Nantucket sky. But half past five the clouds broke in the west, and the sun came out and did wonderful things to the little farms in their nests of big trees. The wet green shone like Courbet's juicy garden pieces, and even the driver got excited and said: "Don't you think she'd love this?"

The noon sun was shining brightly when we rolled into the campus of Duke University, where we parked in front of the chapel, which, in the case of Duke, is a miniature cathedral. Stopping a teacher to ask for the whereabouts of a biologist I



## NORTH CAROLINA

wanted to see, I fell into conversation with him, and while taking me to where I wanted to go, he pointed out to me how each decoration above each window was different from any other. Also, that of the thousand of little rosettes there were not two alike. Also the statue of the founder (which made you long for something by Epstein). Likewise the chimneys—most of which were dummies—differed one from the other, but in spite of this dissimilarity everywhere, there was a unity over the architecture which made for one big harmony.

This was undeniably so. The whole thing was built of a yellowish-gray stone and as near in the image of Oxford (?) as possible; and while wondering why in blazes the founder couldn't let North Carolina evolve its own suitable, chimneyless architecture, the spectator did lose sight of the dissimilarities.

Walking about I came to the hospital, an imposing building within which twentieth century sunlight—and even daylight—had been sacrificed to narrow Gothic windows to be admired from without. Within, in the artificially lit corridors, the visitor thought of twentieth century glass-and-steel functionalism. The rooms and wards were undoubtedly the latest scientific word in rooms and wards, but the emotional values—such as they were—were all confined to the outside.

Some years ago an artist came here and spoke to, or was spoken to, by the Dean about the empty gray panels above the beds in the children's ward. Anyway, the outcome of the talk was that with the hospital supplying the paint (house-enamel, as they had to use something that could be soap-washed) the artist—for the fun of it—during the next two years filled the said panels with pictures from Mother Goose and Alice in Wonderland. I counted 163 such panels, and to the best of my knowledge, aside from the Chatham collection of early American

prints in the medical library and some portraits in oil of the Founder by somebody, they are the only pictures in the University.

I went in to see the cathedral—erected in the course of two years!—and although I don't believe in building Gothic cathedrals in our day, I must admit I enjoyed walking here looking at the stained glass windows. These windows were made in America, by Americans, and mainly from American-made glass, and are as good to look at as any I remember seeing. The figures, particularly their feet, are sufficiently abstract to make these ancient symbols part of our day, even though they are garbed in the traditional medieval draperies. I enjoyed, as always, meeting an old friend: there he was, in the John the Baptist window—John the Baptist being beheaded by Puvis de Chavannes, the identical one, executioner and all, from the Metropolitan Museum!

In the memorial chapel, where is interred the dust of the Dukes, is white glass (*grisaille*), which, by contrast of lighting, gives the spectator the—undoubtedly correct—impression that the souls of the three marble barons, each recumbent on his own coffin lid, which you see through the wrought iron grill, are in heaven. The organ played while I walked about reading Biblical history in glass and stone—during which I came upon a statue of Sidney Lanier—and while my companion explored spiral staircases and tried to get up into the belfry.

The evening we spent thinking aloud in the hospitable home of the biologist Dr. W. A. Perlzweig. And the things we thought about ranged from the little decorations of capers, butter, parsley, and anchovies the cook puts on top of Vienna schnitzels—through the prose of H. M. Tomlinson—to Mencken's use of foreign words when it doesn't seem called for.

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It has its advantages, however, to be able to embody an idea in one word. Example: *Zeitgeist*, as against splitting it into four: "Spirit of the Time." In German the concept wrapping itself in nine letters becomes a visual and potent personality, whereas in English the wind blows through it in two or three different places.

The same with the word *Narrenfreiheit*, a word which gives a great deal of positive information about the people who coined it—even as the lack of it in English tells of certain negative characteristics. It is a deadly word. A stiletto wrought by a master craftsman, and used in defense against satire by inactive minds. Translated into English as, for example, "fool's licence," it loses its poignancy and is barely understood. Making it understandable by splitting the idea into more words makes it less potent yet: "The clown's freedom to make fun of people." While the German drops his torpedo and watches the effect, the English throw the ingredients one by one.

I had a letter to Paul Green, Professor of Philosophy and author of *In Abraham's Bosom*; but on calling at the University of North Carolina, I heard he was "at the coast" putting on one of his plays. Then I had to try without an introduction: "Do you teach art at Chapel Hill?"

I was directed to a building showing its roof among the trees.

There was a friendliness and mellowness about this whole place to which Duke has not yet attained. The trees do it. Trees, vines, and the patina of moss and years.

I went in and found a summer class in session: school teachers from all over North Carolina were making posters and learning how to teach art, and all working conscientiously, while their teacher had gone out sketching. In two large rooms two exhibi-



*Southern Spring*  
[Oil]

HOBSON PITTMAN



tions were hung: one of Parisian textile designs modified for American use by American artists, and another of enlarged photographs in Chinese-looking tea-wood frames.

The latter showed what the Chinese landscape looks like when seen through kodak eyes, and they had been colored in oil according to a process perfected by "The White Brothers," but I'll wager anything the White Brothers had taken lessons from our gift shops. It said in the catalogue that each picture had taken its man from a hundred to a hundred and fifty hours to complete, and indeed, it was done painstakingly and made you muse on the things Chinese patience was being used for in our day. The pictures had been colored realistically and pointed to the high spots of the Chinese landscape. It was an important exhibition, and I was glad to see it, for it showed, by implication, but as nothing else could show it, to what incomparable heights the old Chinese masters had risen in their interpretation of the Chinese landscape.

I found someone who could speak without rancor—simply as statement of facts—yet gracefully and not without a sense of humor, albeit with some regret—of the North Carolina landscape and its interpreters, or the lack of them.

A North Carolina exhibition, which the university had put on, had had 150 canvases submitted, from which the jury, consisting of local directors, had selected forty-two. I asked if, according to my informant's opinion, any were left out which reasonably might have been included. Two or three more might perhaps have been squeezed in, I was told.

"Were there any North Carolina landscapes in the show?" I asked.

There had been one labelled *North Carolina* which my informant had recognized as housetops from Provincetown, Mass.

## NORTH CAROLINA

"Don't you think it strange?" I asked. "I have just been over it, and I find this state most paintable." But I was told that North Carolina artists, as soon as they could fly, flew north and painted abstractions a la Picasso. Nobody had told them North Carolina could be painted.

"I know of one," I said. "Hobson Pittman. He flew north, as you say. He wanted to make a living by his painting and enough besides to come down here again and paint his native scene. He has a North Carolina vista in the Metropolitan Museum, which must be considered something—and he is painting the North Carolina countryside as he remembers it from his childhood. I stopped and looked at his work as I came through Pennsylvania. It makes you long for those places. I tried to find his subjects as I came through here—one of them a big house with lots of trees and space around it, but I doubt it lay by the cement over which I came."

I went out to the car and blew the letter F ( . . - . ) on the horn to summon my companion. He came. He had been interviewing students on the campus and told me what a "green" place was Duke.

At this point on my trip through the *Landscape with Blooming Tree*, on which—as Cabell says—almost anything is more than likely to happen, a voice, sympathetic withal, spoke to me: "A fundamental fault is your highly artificial device—your saying that you are unable to see a landscape unless some painter has interpreted it for you. Thus the painting is made the point of reference and the actual landscape is interpreted in terms of the painting. This is clever—but it is the most extreme example of getting the cart before the horse that I have ever encountered."

"?" my eyebrows said.

"M-hm," agreed the voice, "Sidney Lanier keeps doing the same sort of thing in his poetry when he compares natural objects to Shakespearean characters. Lanier has 'Desdemona morn,' the 'Caliban sea,' the 'Ariel Cloud,' and 'Old hill! thou gashed and hairy Lear!' As Barrett Wendell used to point out to his Harvard classes, all this is grotesquely upside down: nature is really bigger than Shakespeare.—So is the American landscape bigger than anybody's picture frame."

"And the pig is bigger than anybody's stomach, but it gets inside just the same, thanks to the sausage-grinder," I mused as I cleared my throat for action: "Lanier might have chosen his similes from his own country's literature," I said. "Otherwise I have no quarrel with his interpreting the landscape's mood by relating it to concepts known to those who don't run. As for the dogma, 'Nature is bigger than Shakespeare,' that sounds like one of the things I wouldn't have said for any money, and I should like to see Professor Wendell write a formula for 'Nature' in which some symbol must not be interpreted as man's—in this case Shakespeare's awareness of it. And as for the American landscape being bigger than anybody's picture frame: I consider man's awareness of nature the biggest thing in the universe. Hence art, which serves to sharpen that awareness might be considered the horse pulling the cart into the light. In Japan, they tell me, a poet will write about four different views of a lake: the moon rising over the mountains in one corner; the wild geese flying south in another corner; a fisherman drawing his net in a third, and the summer rain falling among the bamboo in the fourth. The value of the poem will be judged by the size of the cart the horsepowers of the poem are able to drag to the four corners of the lake. Master verses will set all Japan pilgrimaging



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to the spot and the American ambassador will be taken to see it."

"There is another thing," said the voice: "On your trip you cover so much ground in so short a time. You stick so closely to the cement highways that you can't possibly see the American landscape at its best. One could tear out hair and weep at the inadequacy with which you handle North Carolina. You see it neither as God made it, nor as man ruined it, nor as any possible reality in between. One gets the impression you don't want to see it."

"I regret that," I said. "But with my time circumscribed by my means, and with the space I have in mind to cover, I have to stick to the cement. I have therefore limited my purpose to see if the country—as it is available to the average citizen—can be seen in terms of our native painters in the manner in which Holland can be seen after Van Gogh has opened our eyes to its subtleties, or as certain sections of Paris can be appreciated after Utrillo has unified and accentuated their characteristics in his canvases."

"I wish you would look at the Southeast again," said the voice. "It is the subtlest landscape in America—in form, in coloring, in emotional tone. It is also the most fragile, in that its beauty is most readily destroyed. The cool neatness of New England is not due merely nor even primarily to Puritan thrift. New England soil is locked against destruction for half the year by snow and ice. At no time is its humus subject to such rapid bacterial disintegration as in the South. Every fresh scar is promptly covered with a blanket of grass. But Southern soil, once denuded of its natural forest, is utterly helpless—at every season of the year it melts like sugar before torrential rains—and from a blooming landscape of infinitely varied vegetation it becomes an eroded skeleton. Then, as if in kindness to fools and children, the

little pines—so golden beside the dark New England pines—and broomsedge, green, lavender, and brown, creep over ruined cotton fields and begin to create the soil again. As an observer you should at least know there is as much emotional kick in the ‘wasted land’ as in the fat barns of Iowa, if you want to speak about it effectively.”

I said: “You are unquestionably right, and I see my limitations. One of them is not inability to provoke a native son into speaking up beautifully for his landscape, and in terms that will enable others to realize its nature.”



VIA GREENSBORO and Charlotte we drove southward through a countryside reminding more of what can be seen from route 17 in New York State, than anything seen in Pennsylvania or Maryland or Virginia. But now the earth was becoming red, which in itself would be an earmark of Southern landscape painting, for this red earth extends to Florida and as far west as Texas.

Unpainted Negro shacks were also an expressive feature, and here and there by the shacks I noticed a kind of tree I had never seen before. The most decorative tree in the world! It was the chinaberry or umbrella tree, and is considered a nuisance in formal gardens as it is forever dropping sticks and berries and leaves onto the lawn. I was also told it was a worthless exotic, of far less dignity than many a native tree. But whenever I saw one, my imperishable soul split itself into a flock of pickaninnies and danced around it as it would around a Christmas tree. I don't care if the chinaberry never gets house-and-garden-broke, if I lived down here I would have nothing but chinaberry trees around my unpainted shack.

Each weatherbeaten hut set among these trees was an invita-

tion to make a water color, and as long as no native son or daughter of the state had shown me one, I saw them as I recalled the aquarelles of a painter who once spent a winter in Florida painting Negro shacks among live oaks and palm trees.

As we had driven from North Carolina around a bend into South Carolina, the landscape had changed as if by magic. It became hilly, and from the elevated road we could see the red earth between the rows of plants in the fields below. To the right, far out, stood a solitary mountain, and to the left were two smaller mountains, pyramids without tops, table mountains—paintable, both they and the far reaching, crazy-quilted valleys.

It didn't last long. The country closed in on us again, and we drove through milltown after milltown and did 250 miles. The weather was clear, and with the top down we were doing 50 along good roads, and to my unsophisticated mind it was like flying; but when I suggested this I was soundly raspberried.

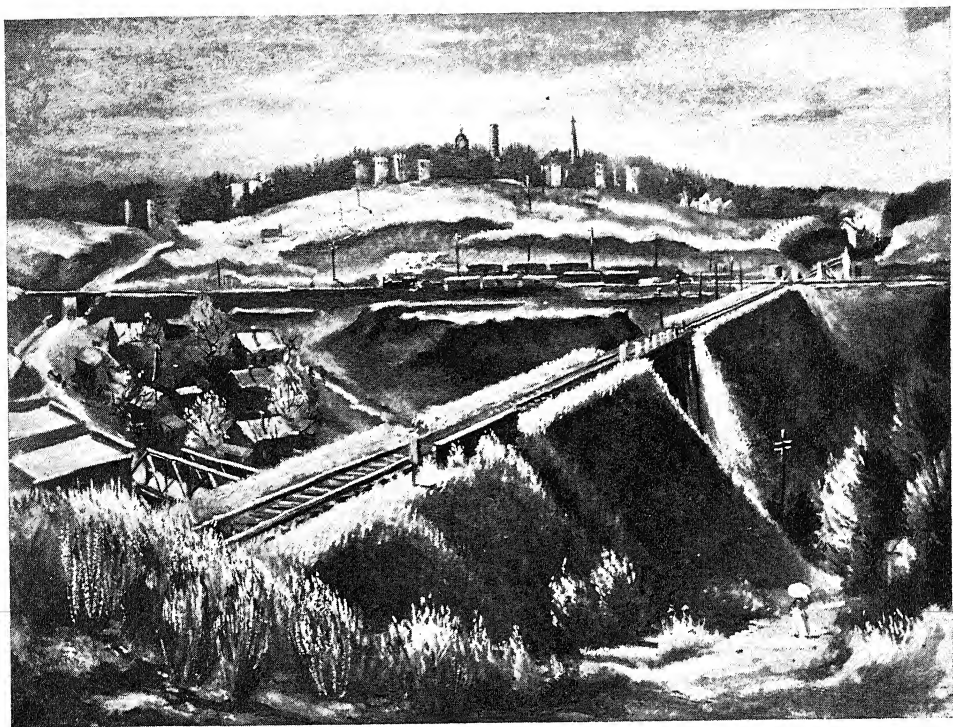


IN NEW YORK STATE I have learned to tell beans from corn, but about the things I saw growing below the Dixie line, I yet had to be instructed. The plants between which we saw the red earth were not beans as I had misinformed my companion when he asked. They were cotton—young cotton planted this year, standing there dreaming and wondering if their fruit would be turned into shirts and sheets for men of good will, or into gun cotton and bandages.

But now I discovered a new feature in the landscape: in Bearsville, N.Y., the rows of growing things run parallel from one end of the field to the other, and if they meet a hill they run straight up and straight down it on the other side, and this gives to the landscape a characteristic you are not aware of until you see something different in Georgia. You might think Georgia artists would have informed you about this.

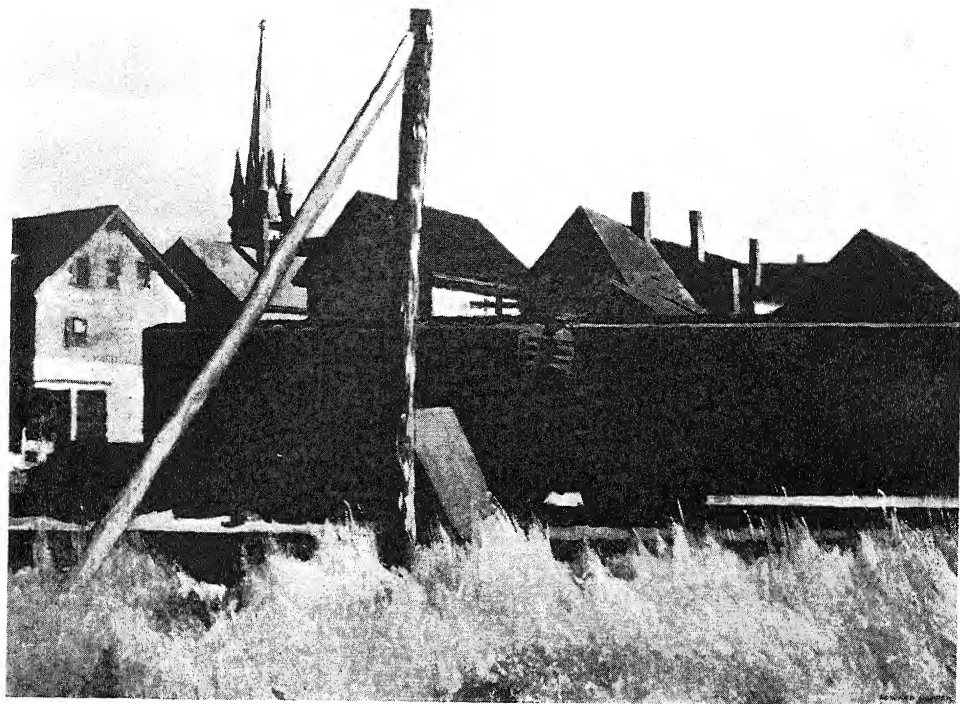
The rows of little plants followed the contours of the fields in a manner to keep the soil from washing away, so that if you see a hillock in a field, you imagine concentric rings to have been laid around it.

Driving, I looked up at such a furrowed, red, little hill close



*View of Athens*  
[Oil]

LAMAR DODD



*Freight Cars at Gloucester*  
[Oil]

EDWARD HOPPER

by the roadside and planted with such green bushes. (I was later told that the word *bush* is never applied to cotton.) In the sun on top of it stood outlined against the pale blue sky an old man dressed in deep blue denim and holding the handles of a harrow pulled by the whitest and skinniest of horses. On his head the old man had on an umbrella-shaped straw hat of the kind known from Japanese prints—and the whole thing, not having been shown me by Georgia artists, reminded me of a thing as far-fetched as Breughel's *Fall of Icarus* from the National Gallery in Brussels, in which picture a Flemish farmer plows with a similar skinny white horse—and be dam'd to you, Georgia artists, for not telling the rest of the country!

I saw no more white horses, but a great many brown mules doing such harrowing in such fields and attended by Negroes. So many, in fact, that I thought Georgia's sign in the almanac for June might be a Negro harrowing such fields with a brown mule. The landscape at times opened up, revealing scattered woods and looking like no other country or state I had seen. It was red. "Red to the rind," as Georgia says about her water-melons.

To Athens then I came, and at the University of Georgia started asking for Dr. Wade, Professor of English. But school was out, and Dr. Wade was at his mother's plantation in Marshallville.

"Do you teach art here?"

They did, and I was directed to a certain house on the huge campus of the university. It was a treat to walk into a place lined with modern paintings, albeit students' work. I stayed here and looked. Some of it was landscape, and some of it showed red earth. The students were being taught to look and see, apparently.



## GEORGIA

The teacher was Lamar Dodd. I knew his name from a Chicago Art Institute catalogue, but I didn't know his work. Now I saw he was exploring the Georgia scene, although seeing it in a lower key than I saw it. Among other things I heard, was that he had taken his pupils to the opening of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts—and from what I generally heard and saw, I gathered the university was in the hands of liberal and modern people. Not so long ago the art students had been taught to get their ideas for paintings by studying and copying reproductions, and pictures from calendars; but since somebody or other had been retired, they had been permitted to see what of their own they could find in the fields.

In another branch of the school a woman was teaching state grammar school teachers how to teach youngsters art, and she did it by giving them a line from Mother Goose to illustrate as they imagined children from five to eight years old would do it. The resulting pictures were rather amazing, but the idea might not be bad. From training their imagination thus, teachers might recall their own childhood reflexes, and come to sympathize with the child's Will to Express.

It would be good for everybody, child and adult alike, to be able to paint, or dance, or sing or have some medium or other in which to express emotion. As it is, people with no artistic outlets force themselves, as a protective measure, to ignore joy stimulus through beauty, so as not to become choked with an emotion they are unable to express except in platitudes or hysteria—and trust their defense mechanism to immunizing them to beauty.

The defense mechanism of the fellow workers of the consumptive Jewish boy and poet Sam Goldstein, whom I used to know, caused them to call him unspeakable names when he reached his arms towards a setting sun he saw through the fac-

tory windows. Those fellows had all long ago been obliged to quench their joy in a sunset so as not to be called such names.

Children are permitted to express their joy in living by laughter, noise, and play, and their art efforts are encouraged by society. But as they grow older and grow up, an irrational tradition demands that they become quiet and serious. Considering how an old frustrated and frustrating generation is forever sliding underground, and that a new is forever being born—and considering what marvelous chances for improvement of the race are inherent in that process, why not instill pride in happiness and in its expression into the young?

I asked the teacher if she had read *Creative Youth* and *Creative Power* from which books I had got my ideas on education. It was not that she needed to, but I thought it might give her a lift to see a wise man preach what apparently she was trying to practice.

The Decatur post office was but seventy miles away, and calling us with more voices than one, for here we had had our mail addressed, and besides, I had offered to put up a mural Paul Rohland had been appointed to paint for the Decatur post office by the Treasury Art Project.

One per cent—amounting generally to between four and six hundred dollars—of the total cost of a post office is allocated to art, but if the architect strikes a snag in erecting the building, that money is the first to pay for added expenses, on the theory that the public can do without esthetics sooner than anything else. We are not yet at a stage where we consider the muses as indispensable as, presumably, did the Greeks. I like to see the maidens dance, but the conditioning of my social consciousness in recent years has been such that I feel they should be allowed

but a few pirouettes until the bread line has been abolished, the pirouettes in this peculiar allegory being the portraits of the bread line, or "Social Scenes."

("But," said one, "the bread line doesn't like to look at portraits of itself.")

"The bread line should be made self-conscious," said the other, who had painted it.

"But people don't like to be made self-conscious," objected the first. "Of the two they would rather look at landscapes—and I don't know if I blame them."

"They would rather go to the movies," said the third, and the two others said no more.)

The Decatur post office is a gray-veined marble building with young trees coming up around it, and pleasantly situated in what I was now told is a white-collar town. Here live the government officials employed in Atlanta, and only such shops as cater to immediate needs are permitted. I had been told it was a mining town.

There is a certain way of going about hanging one of these post office murals, which I have been told about by one who said he knew, and although I have my own ideas on the subject, I shall here set down his and whatever else he said, to show the difficulties a government might be up against in dealing with individualists. (This conversation happened on the banks of the Sawkill River, in Woodstock, N.Y.)

To begin with, my protagonist had objected violently when I spoke about artists getting a wider audience as post office mural painters than they could ever hope to get by painting easel pictures.

"Some artists!" he snapped. "Some artists! Only such of them

as have a private income! The others can't afford to paint those post office murals!"

I asked if he thought the public was being deprived of the work of good artists without money of their own.

"Exactly!" he said. "As far as the Treasury Art Project goes—a painter who has to run an elevator for a living can't do it—can't go near it! Not until he gets on the W.P.A. as a relief case can he work for Uncle Sam, although his work won't go into post office buildings."

He went on to talk about post office murals in a derogatory way until he came on the subject of hanging them: "You go to the postmaster," he said, and went on to tell how from the postmaster the painter finds the name of a reliable paperhanger. "The chances are the postmaster knows no more about reliable paperhangers than you do, but if the paperhanger later proves unreliable, nobody can blame you."

That was one point, and had it been presented with less cynicism, I might have enjoyed its humor.

"The government wants an 8x10 film and two prints of the mural after it is hung," he went on. "What they want the film for, I don't know, but it prevents you from using your own 2x4 camera and having the prints enlarged, and in that way save some of the pittance they pay you for the job. You have to go to the local photographer and have him do it for you. The way to go about that is this:

(The following sounds like one of Rube Goldberg's inventions.)

"When the photographer hears it is a post office mural he is going to take, something happens to his brains. He thinks he is being hired by the Government, and that Uncle Sam is going to

pay for it, and puts on all the traffic will bear. Nothing you can tell him will disillusion him. He thinks you're a grafter, who is trying to horn in on his living.

"The way to handle him then is this: you let him drag his big camera and all his junk to the post office. You have him pull the lamp that hangs down in the middle of the picture to one side. You have him measure the distance and get all set, and then you go up to him: 'Say, Mister, how much did you say this was going to come to?' 'Seventeen dollars and seventy-five cents,' he says looking up at you from under his cloth. You laugh: 'Forget it, Mister—I'm sorry. I can't swing that. You better take your stuff away. My own photographer from New York (or Boston, or Philadelphia as the case may be) is coming through here next week on his way to so-and-so. He'll do it for half that price.'

"Well, there he is with his camera all set, and what can he do but let you have it at a reasonable price?" asked my informant.

I threw my cigar into the Sawkill River: "No!" I said, "that's not my way of doing business!"

"Be reasonable," he said. "What is a painter to do to make anything at all on those post office murals? Think of the research work a feller's got to do to make a decent job. You got to go to the place and find out what the people want. You might have to travel hundreds of miles to see the place to get local color. You have to paint sketches and send them prepaid to Washington for criticism and corrections, and believe me, they give you plenty—all you want—they'll paint the picture for you down there! They'll tell you what, and how, and the way to do it—and if you get snooty they can delay your payments until you come to heel. It's bureaucracy you are up against. A flock of little schoolmarm Hitlers!"

"Come, come," I said. "My dear fellow!"

"And Washington returns them 'collect,' " he went on, ignoring my remonstrations. "You have to pay every inch of the way, and finally you have to send your sketches down to them for keeps! Not that they do anything but store them in a warehouse, but you might have been able to sell them to some guy in the town where the mural went up. You have to pay for every bit of your materials, and you have to travel the distance to the post office once more to hang the thing. Where does the profit finally come in?"

"Profit!" I said. "The receipt of a check from the United States Government means more than the amount for which it is written."

He smiled: "You get me."

I said I most certainly did not! "And besides," I added, "not every painter has to travel 'hundreds of miles' to hang his mural. I hung one for a friend not sixty miles away."

"You are dam'd right!" he cried hysterically when he saw I wasn't siding with him. "Some are so far away it would ruin a painter of modest means to go there. I heard of a fellow up north who did a mural for a post office down south. If he hadn't had a friend down there who offered to supervise the hanging of it, he'd have had to mortgage his home to get down himself. 'More than the amount for which it is written!'—Ech!—Don't spring such . . . on me. I happen to know some of the fellows who thought they could afford to take on a Treasury job. Those guys don't eat for pleasure. They eat to keep thoughts of food they can't afford from interfering with their work."

He stuck his fingers into his beard and gazed at the far bank of the Sawkill. If he had been a foreigner, I could so easily have told him to go back to his own country, if he didn't like the way the people of the United States ran theirs.

## GEORGIA

"I have an appointment at three . . ." I began, but he didn't hear me, or else pretended not to.

"There is another thing," he went on, button-holing me. "This painter I mentioned had been unable to go south and explore the scene he was to depict, so he painted Negroes picking cotton in a cotton field as he thought it should be. The fellow who hung it for him told me about it: a white man had come into the post office and looked at the mural after it was hung. 'Did you paint that?' he asked the guy. 'No, I only hung it.' 'Well, the fellow who painted it didn't know what he was about. That's ginned cotton them niggers have picked in their baskets. And another thing: he has painted half-a-dozen niggers there, and every one with his mouth closed. That don't happen. Niggers laugh and sing.' So there!" concluded my informant.

"So there?" I said. "Well, what of it?"

"What of it?" he repeated after me. "An Alabama man should have had the job. He would know about the life down there, and he might have been able to save some of the ditch-digger wages. What is the sense in making a guy from California paint a Texas scene he's never seen?"

"Alabama man?" I said. "Don't you know Alabama painters go north as soon as they can fly? And besides, who told Alabama men Negroes could be painted?"

"Anne Goldthwaite did," he snapped.

I couldn't come back on that argument. I could have supported it by mentioning Pop Hart, Pascin, and McCrady. However, in an argument with a fellow of this type, I feel it inadvisable to give in on any point.

But the Decatur mural which I hung was a Georgia spring landscape painted by a Southerner who knew the countryside

when the dogwood and the azalea bloomed. The people who came in here acknowledged it, and nodded to it in recognition of Georgia spring. "No, I'm only here to see it hung," I had to answer them—to my regret.

The postmaster, who was proud of his marble post office, liked it too. He had heard murals were going round, and had written Washington that he'd like to have one. "I was a bit afraid they would send me one of these with cogwheels and mean-looking capitalists—like this Mexican . . ." He nodded approvingly at the mural, and using such terms as non-painters will about such things, said, for all to hear: "But this is a good, safe, harmless picture. A mural—not a moral."

Sometimes words—when used for expressing reactions towards murals—will throw a spotlight on the speaker. As I stood contemplating in Washington, D.C., the mural Mr. George Biddle has given his country, two ladies came walking rapidly up to it: "There she is! Right in front! The image of Mrs. Simpson. Don't you think?"

"Hm—maybe—a little." Exeunt ladies.

Not having heard everything there is to hear, I hadn't heard of any art activities in Atlanta, except that the Southern States' Art League had held its seventeenth annual exhibition here in 1936. Nevertheless, it being the capital of Georgia we thought we ought to see it. In the distance we saw, looming above soot and dirty brick, that which one will never mistake for anything else in a state capital: the State Capitol.

But the road we were on was not inviting. To one side of it and running on for miles was a capitalistic railroad siding in all its depressing horror. I doubt if even Edward Hopper could have found any color in it. To the other side were slum houses, so



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nondescript and unpicturesque, and yet with the catfish-dinner, Come-to-Jesus, and liquor signs so indicative of a wallowing plenty that—as somebody said of a similar place in Sioux City—the social scene boys have found it inadvisable to put it in their pictures.

The road was dirty and bumpy and probably the wrong one. I mean it wasn't the one taken by the white-collar commuters from Decatur, and finally it became so depressing that we stuck out a hand and made a sharp left turn across the tracks and drove on to Macon.

I have since read that in Atlanta are located some very fine and rich coca-cola bottler families' palaces. But riches isn't beauty's only prerequisite. Taste is also necessary. I mean taste in a wider sense than the one which can be bought from architects, landscape gardeners, and interior decorators. I mean a world-embracing good taste, or, to limit ourselves for the present, a city-embracing good taste. Considering the road we travelled on, a coca-cola palace in Atlanta is like a jewel suspended on a dirty neck. A pimple would be in better taste, if you do not choose to wash the neck.

We came into Macon after the lights had been lit. It was a Saturday night and all the stores along the very broad business streets were open. Here were all the five-and-tens we had ever seen up north, besides some indigenous to the South only. Also the country's chain stores, including the anchor chains of Sears and Montgomery. A thriving town with parks running down the center of its boulevards, and a big Saturday night crowd in the streets.

I was to call on a relative of mine and started looking for her the next morning. Finding the house, I found nobody home, but a little kid on the sidewalk told me that she and her two boys

were in church. We drove about the streets for a while, which isn't hard in Macon, and on our return found my ten-year-old nephew had returned from Sunday school. "I thought it was you two," he greeted us. "My friend said, 'a New York licence, and an old man, and a young boy.'"

"M-hm," I said pleasantly, "that's right. I was the old man."

"M-hm," he said, also pleasantly. "I know"—and I fell to musing on how in . . . we can expect to run this world of ours, considering the divergent viewpoints we have of it.

The ladies in Macon are very lovely, and have an easy—and good—time expressing themselves in conversation, and the reason for this I was made to understand, or led to surmise, is, that this was all that was left for them to do after G . . . S . . . had m . . . t . . . G . . . Perhaps their outlook may be said to have been colored in recent days by a sort of White-Man's-Burden way of thinking.

"Look at this stigmatization of us!" I was told, as I was handed a book of reproduced photographs to which captions had been written. I had seen this book before and had read the captions, and I had humbly thought that captions conveying the exact opposite ideas would have fitted the pictures as well, or better. But not wanting to appear reactionary I hadn't said anything, and all I said now was: "That's old hat up north."

"But it's the truth."

"So's an old hat, but it is not in fashion."

"Can suffering people ever be out of fashion?" (When Southern eyes are flashing—)

"Not suffering people, but an attitude of the reading public as discerned by publishers. They are less on advertising these highly colored things. They are a bit dated. As a means of con-

veying a most legitimate viewpoint they seem to have overshot the mark."

"I can show you instances of it right here in Macon."

"I wish you would. I have read a great deal about sharecroppers. Fiction, that is, which might have impressed me more, had the author employed the insidious means of understatement. Some propaganda is so obvious and revolting that it defeats its own ends. But if you can show me proof of it—I certainly shouldn't like it, but I'll accept it, and mold my attitude accordingly."

"Will you? I believe you have come down here with your mind made up not to believe, if it were put up in front of you."

"No," I told her. "I want to keep an open mind, if you will show me what you have here. It's not to write a book about it, that I want to see it. I want to be convinced for my own sake, one way or the other. But I believe what saves society from people like myself is that it is impossible to convince us of anything. If we were convinced, we would hurl ourselves like bombs against that which we thought should be destroyed. Shall we go in my car? We can put the top down and see the whole horizon."

So we went. It was a Sunday afternoon, and we drove down one street and up another: "This is one of the worst streets in town," she said as we slowly proceeded.

I looked about me, and in spite of being mainly aware of two well dressed white people in a new car obviously slumming through a section that had found itself strangely un-approved of, I did realize that I was on an unpaved street, and barren in so far that no trees were planted on it. There was no refuse lying about anywhere, but this fact gave more the impression of the street being wind-blown, or pecked by chickens than cleaned. That no refuse had been thrown, might be because there was

none to throw. It was lined with unpainted, weathered bungalows of which I endeavored not to take a painter's point of view. I realized I couldn't see what was inside these houses, but on the porches sat Negroes, the men with their feet on the rail, the women with theirs on the floor. Some of the people sat on the steps, and children were running about playing. The whole scene was expressive more of Sunday rest, as I knew it from porches up north, than of lethargy. Like question marks surrounding my cicerone's viewpoint, were the petunias growing in tomato cans wherever there was room for them.

"I don't think that people who have enough interest in life to grow petunias in tomato cans can be said to have reached the bottom," I said.

"You don't think people should be helped until they have reached the bottom?"

"Yes, I think they should. But so should you and I be helped, and the people on Park Avenue. I am not prepared to say how. Bathtubs, medicine—education for such as can carry it are good things, I suppose, but I don't see that possessing them has made you and me so all-fired happy—which leads me to think that not bathtubs and water only, but by asking for more from oneself and less from others may one be saved. Maybe our trouble is that the twentieth century nervous system of telephone, telegraph, television, and radio we are installing in the social body, tends to make that body less like individuals spread over the land and more like a human being aware of all his members. Maybe this being then, has begun to feel his high hat and white collar are in bad taste, as long as he has no pants on and is walking barefooted in the mud. That feeling of uneasiness might be what causes us to be driving here. I should like to see the inside of those houses."

"I have seen them," she said. "I assure you they are horrible."

However they were, I felt that should I see them, it would be through the eyes of their occupants. For I had lived in steamships' fo'c'stles, and I recall lying with a foreign ship in Philadelphia once, and an American sailor-friend of mine coming on board saying: "You ought to get out of this swinish hole, Cage, and sail in a good union fo'c'stle." And I recall my shipmates saying after he had gone: "What did that windbag mean by calling our fo'c'stle a swinish hole? This is our home. We live here."

"Turn left," she said. "I'll show you a similar street where WHITE people live!"

We saw it. "They have petunias here too," I observed. "But I suppose petunias in tomato cans can also be held against society." The only difference between the two streets was that I found it easier to interpret the faces of the white people than of the black, and I have no doubt that I should have felt as they did, had a shiny new car driven down my street with fugitively observing occupants obviously questioning my values.

"Some of them are syphilitic."

"They have syphilis on Park Avenue, too. I suppose you look upon that whole poverty-stricken stratum as a sore? Well, granted it is, it is not going to be cured by dusting it with talcum powder."

"What remedy would you suggest?"

"None. I am not a doctor. But I don't think it can be cured by the laying on of hands. Read Bertrand Russell's *Power*. He advocates a coalescence of economic and political power in a state, where publicity for grievances is possible, and where government isn't able to perpetuate itself by fraudulent means. I haven't seen anything better suggested. He seems to think it can

be brought about by instilling a sober and scientific outlook in the people—and there's the rub. It is easy to accomplish something that can be brought about by an appeal to the emotions—particularly to the low emotions—whipped up by harangues and brass bands. But you can't ballyhoo people into a sober and scientific outlook."

In two cars we all drove to a plantation which I tried to embrace with my intelligence that I might place another bit of the earth into the jigsaw puzzle, which, when completed, will reveal an answer to the riddle: what does this country need? But I failed to get the significance of it. I couldn't tell if this extensive piece of property were rich or poor, just or unjust, good or bad, or whether it was right or wrong that I should be walking on it. But I walked on it anyway, and with the children I strolled into the watermelon field, where the Negro gardener pointed out to us the good melons that we might help ourselves. I had come along to hear the Negro talk. I had heard it when we first arrived, and I had never before heard a voice so sweet. He told me he had seventeen children, and thinking it the right thing to say, I said I hoped he would have seventeen more. And judging from the melodious way he answered "Yaw-Sah," it had been the right thing to say.

The plantation house was very old. It was one of few that hadn't burned in a great fire that raged between Atlanta and the Coast some seventy-odd years ago. It was an enormous house. Through it from east to west ran a big hall. Through it from north to south ran another big hall. Where the two intersected a hammock was slung and here, I suppose, was where succeeding old massas kept cool until time came for them to go into the cold ground.

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In one of the parlors hung four large canvases of the Hudson River school. They had been bought at the door, frames and all, from a man who said he had painted them himself. In all the other rooms hung some surprisingly capable student's work of a long time ago, portraits and landscapes, and on asking the old lady of the house who had painted them, she told me she had. She had done them while on the west coast, when she was studying with young Emil Carlsen, and her father was helping found the University of California. On a table lay *The Yearling* and *Madame Curie*, and I felt like a rube for not being able to tell the old lady what I thought of them.

We went to another plantation. I had given up looking for an understanding of economics and agriculture, and concentrated instead on such things as my limitations qualified me to see: peaches, pecans, pimentos, peanuts, peppers, and pigs—and also a fig tree full of fruit from which I ate, and from which I plucked a leaf to send my love.

It was mainly peaches they raised here. They were ripe and ripening, but as for painting these parts the spring must be the time. As the owner drove me over his thousand acres, I visualized black and brown figures on the background of blossoming peach and pecan.

I asked the planter about his Negroes, and he expressed himself well and in exceptionally fine English. He was a large man who reminded one of the "Mississippi Plantation Owner" photographed for Archibald Macleish's book, *Land of the Free*. But only for an instant, for—fortunately for himself—no living man everlastingly carries an expression—as does a photograph—as though he were going to sell you down river (and in justice to Mississippi planters, see also Jonathan Daniels' portrait of Oscar Johnston in his chapter "Men, Mules, and Machines" in



*Snow Valley*  
[Oil]

EMIL GANSO





*Florida*

[Water color]

GEORGINA KLITGAARD

*A Southerner Discovers the South.*) Being full of perplexities themselves, plantation owners will at times express qualities in their faces that make you realize they too are human and long-ing for the Millennium.

The man I here talked to spoke fondly of his “niggers,” and from a viewpoint, I’ll say, which comes naturally to an ordinary, decently thinking human being who has to deal with them under a set-up it would ruin a single man to change.

In the parlor of his house hung a little painting of blooming peach trees, which his wife had given his father long ago. When the old man had died, the planter had told his wife that his father had never liked it, for the two trees in it had been wrongly pruned and would bear no good fruit.

If you scratch the surface, almost anywhere, you can find a painter—sometimes even an artist. It was late in the evening when, with an electric torch, we walked up a brick path between boxwood hedges towards an open door. We had come to look at some water colors. The room was lit up, and from it came the music of a magnificent sounding symphony orchestra. The owner of the place arose and greeted us, and motioning us to chairs let his phonograph finish Strauss’ *Death and Transfiguration* before he shut it off and told us how glad he was we had come. I asked to see his water colors, and like most painters who do not make a profession of their work, he was reluctant to show them.

I have a friend in Woodstock, a painter and lithographer. His predilections are flowers, still life, street scenes, landscapes, and the nude, in the order mentioned, reversed. Whenever I become a little “set” in an idea, or have an idea in need of test by controversy, I go down to his studio of an afternoon, in the

first case to have the dust blown off my thoughts, in the second to have weak parts demolished by having them forcibly contradicted. His argumentative streak stirs the instant I suggest anything, and by asserting myself a little I make the streak coil and rattle its tail. By my simply, then, paying no attention to it, his native force will turn it into a Kansas twister, and if afterwards anything is left of my idea, I'll fit it together and create new pieces for it, and on the whole, have a more plausible thing than when I started:

"Love?" he roared. "What's 'love' got to do with it? The bastards can't paint! They're lawyers, parsons, doctors, brokers the six days of the week!—Sunday they pick up their little easel, their little paintbox, their little chair (when my friend gives an imitation of a lawyer picking up his little chair, I can't look), and then they go out and paint their little picture.—What of it?" he roared again, not meaning, however, for me to answer the question. "What of it, I ask!—Love?—A cowflap lying in the grass steaming of love for the sun? Does the sun give a hoot in hell? Does it shine any brighter? Does it run any faster over the sky? Love, pugh! Ability to put it across is more than half of it. Those amateurs can't do it."

My eyebrows, as you may imagine, were by this time up under the ceiling. I had come down to him with the idea that those who felt the urge to paint should be encouraged to do so. People were none too sure of themselves, and at best only occasionally happy. When they found a release and a delight in painting pictures, they should be helped to do so. "Their love for the thing entitles them to use the medium," I had said. I had, however, been obliged to suggest they be entitled to have dealers handle their work to get the twister started.

The amateur I visited in Macon had spent the vacations of

three years painting water colors of the Georgia landscape. With two or three friends he would each summer go to the mountains and paint. If such a tendency shouldn't be encouraged in our day, even by professionals, what should be encouraged?

We left Macon and drove to the little town of Marshallville, the little business street of which lies segregated in what looks like a cul-de-sac on the other side of the railroad tracks. We stopped at the post office for information.

Crossing the tracks again we drove to where the street became a wooded avenue with white two-storied buildings each lying amply within its own green garden. At one of them, a large colonial house with tall square columns, we stopped. This was the place. Dr. Wade greeted us and let a Negro take our luggage upstairs. It was an old house. The Wades had been in it for four generations. Each successive one had added to it in keeping with his day—the present one having put a bathroom to each bedroom—and indeed, the halls and rooms were big enough never to miss the spaces so ceded to the twentieth century. Throughout the house furniture and portraits made a harmonious whole. Mahogany, silver, and white linen in the dining room and four still life pictures in oil done at one time by a lady of the house. “The influence of the Wesleyan College,” said Dr. Wade, “where young ladies are taught painting.”

In here I had my first mint julep (the mint is crushed, Mr. Daniels), and from the tall columned porch, where I sat that night with Dr. Wade, I heard for the first time the mocking bird.

I suggested, while sitting here, my impression that people in the South had a greater gift for conversation than people up north. Dr. Wade admitted this might be so, and that this, with a concurrent gift for silences might be owing to the traditional

genteel poverty of the South, where people had been thrown on their own resources. And he suggested that a society, not rich, but reasonably assured of a living, would be the most inducive to culture. We debated which of the nations might be said to be so qualified, but came to no conclusion.

Each subject broached was like a vista opened, down which one could lose oneself in pros and cons: were the teachings in Teachers College in Columbia irresponsible experimentations of which the state universities bore the brunt? Or did not the state universities keep up with the teachings of Teachers College? Should children be forced to learn the things they did not wish to learn? And were the colleges being supplied with freshmen who didn't know how to spell, who had no foundations, and who didn't know how to study?

I said—or perhaps I merely lay back in my chair and dreamt an old Utopian dream: schools as we know them abolished, and children dreaming and playing with such toys and tools as their age prompts them to take up, until insatiable thirst for knowledge causes them to seek such teachers as can satisfy their needs. I didn't deem this unattainable, for in that manner, schools and the will of my elders to the contrary, I had managed, and when tired of toys and tools I had begun looking around for answers and explanations.

But having read once in a footnote to *The Legends of Hading* that each Happy Isle is populated with nothing but the unbearable multiplae of its discoverer, I either said no more, or let my Happy Isle sink under the sea.

At breakfast the next morning we discussed the Wesleyan College, which I had visited when in Macon—and I believe we agreed that no first rate picture collection could be obtained from pictures donated by artists. And we spoke about how Mr.

Kress, the five-and-ten cent store king, on travelling through the country stopped at colleges and art institutions and dropped lemons into their turbans from his collection of old masters. I had seen some of these, and although with no shadowgraph at my disposal, I had thought that if Mr. Kress wanted to erect himself a lasting memorial in the hearts of his countrymen, he might better collect work by living Americans and distribute that.

I asked Dr. Wade if it would be possible for me to see the inside of a Negro shack, and he agreed readily to show me one. But when we came out on the plantation, all the grown-ups were in the field hoeing cotton, which is the Negro's favorite occupation, and the expedition had to be given up. But we could ask his cook for permission to enter hers. The cook's husband was sick in bed, though, and as she would also want to tidy up her place before showing it to visitors, she asked us not to go there. Her neighbor, the laundress was home, she thought, and we could try her.

We tried, and arrived at an unpainted bungalow with a porch like most of the rest. Some bungalows have no porches, for at times the Negroes will use them for firewood rather than cut down and saw up a tree and split the pieces. This is an instance of the black man's improvidence which makes me feel akin to him. If I lived in a shack belonging to a man who lived in a stone house—and cutting down trees being what it is—I think that on a cold night I should burn up the porch to keep me and mine warm.

It might be argued that I should have cut down the tree long ago and have a stack of firewood handy by the back door, and I agree, provided I can be sure of having the back door remain mine while the firewood lasts.

We were let inside by the owner, a middle-aged Negro

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woman, who stopped ironing to show us her two rooms, which, with their beds and odds and ends of furniture were orderly and clean. The walls were almost entirely covered with calendars, pictures cut out of magazines, photographs, a couple of lithographs, and a painting on glass showing a landscape in garish colors. It might have been called squalor had it been dirty and located where single siding on 2 x 4's could not have protected its inhabitants from inclemencies of climate. Within its limits the place was harmonious. More so, I dare say, than if its owner had had access to the decorations and objects of art Mr. Kress has for sale in his stores.

Standing here looking, I felt I was trespassing. I felt an apology was due this woman into whose home I was snooping. An apology or, better yet, an explanation. I said: "I am travelling through the country to write a book about it. I am interested to see what people have on their walls by way of pictures. You have quite a collection here. Thanks indeed, for letting me see it."

Anybody who ever wants to come slumming up my way had better learn to say that, and say it in the manner I said it.

Dr. Wade drove me about on the plantation, through fields and woods, and stopped at a shack where lived a Negro, who, having thirty-five children, is the scandal of the community. Dr. Wade spoke to a flock of them playing on the porch. It was like a man talking to the birds in their own language, and I was sorry when it ceased. On the whole round earth, then, there is one little place where people do talk to each other as though they were angels.

We drove on and met one of the Scandal's older children who grew a moustache and whose name was Bull. I have heard that four-letter word pronounced in more ways than any other. I had yet to hear it spoken in a way to make it sound like a caress.

We had driven the two hundred and odd miles to Savannah and had arrived in the evening and found a TOURIST, where, as everywhere in the South, a pitcher of ice water and two glasses went with the service. Touring the rest of the country we came to look back at the tourist homes of the South with nostalgia. It was the difference between dealing with people who looked objectively at themselves and subjectively at you—and people looking objectively at you.

Knowing that my host for the night must be listening to it too, I didn't hold against him the noises that kept me awake when I tried to go to sleep. Endeavoring to make the agglomeration of sounds from horns, radios, cats, dogs, a guitar, and a stubborn motorcycle into a pattern, I finally felt sleep overwhelm me; and as I drew off into unconsciousness, the sound waves turned into pictures and I dreamt I stood in a marble hall looking at a canvas by Picasso.

The road we had come over from Marshallville had been the most delightful one yet. So delightful, indeed, that at one point my companion had requested I stop that he might feast his eyes. It was the Spanish moss that did it. We were nearing the coast where moisture is present in the air to a percentage that will support Spanish moss? The question mark abaft that sentence means it is a conclusion I drew, but which I am not ready to defend. It seems likely though. Much more likely than what I heard on good authority: the Negroes have started making a business of collecting Spanish moss, as it has been discovered the grey skin can be removed and the black thread within used as a substitute for horsehair in horsehair mattresses.

We had stopped on a long bridge leading over a cypress swamp, and my companion had exclaimed at the weird reflections. "Look at that!—and look at that!" and I knew how he felt



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his inability to express his joy by drawing a parallel between this experience and some other—the further fetched, the better poetry. And I wondered if in spite of many happy signs to the contrary he might not have been bitten by the serpent that tormented some of his ancestors.

It was a lovely vista, and something in me sank when I considered artists I knew couldn't be here to see it.

Henry Lee McFee, painter and friend of mine, had located himself for the summer in what I thought was the choicest spot in Savannah: segregated from the town by a dip in the earth, but within easy shopping distance of it, and with a view from his balcony to half the sky, which, after all, is as much of it as your eyes will hold at a time. Below the balcony were the wharves, and beyond them miles of marshes, through which ran a hidden river. A big ocean steamer going by seemed to be gliding over the grass.

I found him quartered here and in an atmosphere that suggested one of his own still life studies.

We started—or rather, I tried to start—an argument, but nothing came of it, for I had taken the wrong tack and found myself talking up McFee his alley. I had said that a painter, to be able to paint a landscape, should have lived with it and become familiar with its moods, and that nobody could come just sailing into a scene and expect to get the significance of it. I should have said the opposite.

"I agree with you," nodded Mac. "People blowing in here to paint will achieve nothing but little tourist souvenirs, and it's the same everywhere: Taos, Woodstock, or Provincetown. One must be able to *feel* the thing one wishes to paint." He moved his fingers as if feeling a piece of heavy drapery, and to illustrate his point he told me how he had called on Andrew Dasburg in Taos.

He had found Dasburg in the throes of painting a landscape, which he knew well. But on the horizon lay a blue mesa, and try as he would Dasburg couldn't get that mesa into his picture. He had tried again and again, but the mountain would not come to the painter. Then he had gone out to *it* in his car, had driven around it, had got the feel of it, and, when he came home, had been able to paint it.

Having been the one to start it, I couldn't very well begin contradicting it. Even among artists certain conventions have to be observed. So I did not say: "I don't see why a painter, along with his gift for handling light, line, and color, cannot have the ability instantly to discern what characterizes, qualifies, and differentiates a landscape whether north, south, east, or west. I can imagine an artist tackling scenes all over the country without making of them something that suggests the great sisterhood of Modigliani." I didn't say it.

We drove to the seashore along a road running through the marshes. McFee was pointing them out to me, but I couldn't honestly say I saw them. "You'll have to show them to me on canvas first," I said. "To me they are nothing but marshes."

But he himself hadn't got the feel of them, he said, to do anything but let them work on his mind.



THE RED earth had ceased on the coast. The ground was black and sandy, and the live oaks and the telegraph wires were hung with moss which made the verticals in a landscape where otherwise the horizontals would have dominated.

Since leaving the North I had found a dearth of garden flowers everywhere, and this had surprised me. I had expected to see the roads garnished with them. "The sun would kill such flowers as you have up north," Dr. Wade had told me. "The spring is the time for seeing flowers in the South." He had had his Negroes plant azaleas and camelias alternately where the plantation bordered the road. He had tried it several times but without luck. Ladies from the city would come in cars at night and dig them up.

"How do you know that?" I had asked.

"We find the imprint of their high heels in the earth."

Florida is grayish-green, and when painters have taught a traveller to see tonalities, and when he has learned that to enjoy a landscape it isn't necessary to have his eye-drums broken by a brass band of primary colors, he can get quite a thrill from the Florida landscape. I am talking about that part of Florida which

lies to the west of a heavy ink line running in a south-southeasterly direction from Jacksonville to Miami. I drew that line myself during an argument about what route to take to get to our Florida destination, and it indicates where I absolutely refused to go, and what lies to the east of it I know from advertisements and tabloids only.

There are few things better than to be standing among the dark foliage of an orange grove, while the oranges hang about you getting sweeter and sweeter by the hour. It is very quiet in here, with all that silent activity going on around you. It is like listening to a big, silent laughter. There is a lake near by. Around it stand old oaks mirroring their Spanish moss in the water. Perhaps there is an alligator in the lake.

We went out casting for bass in a small, deep stream that winds itself through black earth overgrown with scrub pine and palmetto. But at one place the stream widens and big trees grow by its bank, and although nobody was ever known to catch anything here, this is where I had come to cast. We had brought our rods and plugs from home to use them in this particular spot of which I knew. That efficient-looking little casting rod with its agate-lined guides and its reel smelling of 3-in-1 oil; the plugs fantastic-looking and shiny, full of deadly hooks, and designed to wiggle through the water in imitation of a fish.

I cast—and hoping I won't hit a fish I try to hit a spot at which I have aimed.

*“Under the pond-weed do the big fish go,  
In the green darkness where the rushes grow.”*

It is the peace of those ancient Chinese lines I am afraid to break with my twentieth-century plug. It would be like tearing

## FLORIDA

a rent in one of the carps of an Okyo print, and as the plug flies through the air I hope no fish will be fooled by it. My western disappointment when none is, I discount, and cast again, aiming, hoping, and perhaps hitting.

Instead of being reeled in easily, what impressed itself on me as a violent force sheered my line off at right angles to itself. I reeled in. A large bass came to the surface. As it turned I saw its white belly yellow through the soft water—for a second I was thrilled as if by an Okyo print—and there it lay in the grass by my feet: my birthright sold for a mess of fish. No, it is really as easy as changing gears: step on the clutch and make a zig-zag, and from the realm of Shi King and Okyo you enter Andy Gump's—which too has its points.

Quenching that tremendous urge to Billingsgate the news, I thought it would serve my companions right to come here and discover my catch for themselves, while I stood calmly casting. I cast again and, as if in a lie about the events—I caught one more!

My Florida host came first. He thought the beating in the grass was from a snake I had killed.

"The wish is father of the thought," I said.

"But how did they get there? How did they get there?"

"They crawled out and surrendered," I said, casting.

We carried them to the car, on the running board of which sat the youngest member of the expedition, putting a new plug on his line. He was sore at his lack of luck: "The other is no d. good. They won't take it." Then he looked up.

He borrowed my gear, hook, line, and sinker, and I showed him where I had stood, and you couldn't drag him away. "But that superior swing-of-the-arm I can't lend you," said Andy Gump.

There is down here a bird called the bull-bat (a close cousin of the whippoorwill, and more conventionally known as the nighthawk) which starts its activities at sunset. Its name derives—I was told—from the noise at the end of its dive, which it flattens out. The air near the ground then rushes from under its wings with the roar of a bull. I shall always associate that sound with a red sun seen through scraggly pines, as I almost suppose Audubon must have associated them.

On the Gulf beach the water was clear, and in a pavilion with coca-cola, pop corn, radio, hot dogs, and a dance floor, Tillie-the-Toilers and their escorts were unconsciously fitting themselves into a Reginald Marsh composition. On the beach itself they were better at it yet, although down here was more air and space between the individuals than Marsh permits in his canvases.

In the west above the water the sky was blue, but towards the south and southeast hung such juicy clouds as only grow in southern skies. It was the rainy season, and the skies of the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida vied with the landscape for the painter's affection—as we later saw the Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana skies do it. The dark gray clouds lying over the land reached upwards as magnificently shining white cumuli against the blue. A party of Cuban cigar makers and their girls compared them to lemon meringue and a circus parade, which was a descriptive comparison that conveyed just what they did look like, after you had been told. Towards the north lay an electrically charged mass of black clouds muttering to itself in a low thunder about the levity on the beach. They were waiting for 4 P.M. when it is their habit to charge and scare all the little Tillies under cover.

The Greek sponge-fishing fleet at Tarpon Springs with its

boats built on the old Greek model and painted in bright colors, would, if Tarpon Springs were situated on the French Riviera, be world famous. It would then have been painted by the artists of all nations, and abstractions of Greek sponge-fishing boats would hang in all American museums, touched by the personalities of Picasso, Matisse, Derain, *et al.* directly, and indirectly by a good many more. On the wall of a coral and curio shop a sponge-fisherman had painted a marine showing the perils of sponge-fishing with divers, sharks, and octopi. As a work of art it was no good, but it had that naïveté or “modern primitivism” around which has sprung up a vocabulary that enables dealers to palm off that sort of stuff on the unwary.

We were driving northwestwards in a curving line around the Gulf, bound for New Orleans, and, on crossing the Suwannee River, saw a big sign on the bridge which said:

*“Way Down Upon the Suwannee River!”*

I don’t know who put up that sign, but from what I know about things in general, my doubts left a Chamber of Commerce responsible—and in so far as Chambers of Commerce make it a business to know the ins and outs of people who come visiting their state, I cannot say the sign wasn’t subtle. The river wasn’t very broad, but winding, and with tall vegetation making a green tunnel through which it flowed.

It began to rain, and we had to reduce speed and turn on the lights. There was nothing to look at now, except a fan-shaped vista of rain splashing on a blue hood and a few yards of drenched road ahead—wherefore I began mulling over things I had seen coming through the Atlantic states. And I thought: states’ rights?—states’ rights in art? Each state should realize its right to a school of landscape painting indigenous to its soil. Why

should it adhere to a Federal school of French and Mexican influences tending to make a standardized painting of the most diverging scenes?

I spoke to museum people about this, and they shook their heads: there is no regional art in America and can be none. People are too conscious of what is going on, not only in their own country, but in the whole world. Modern means of communication would make a Barbizon of today impossible. If a regional painter appeared, he would be made self-conscious by being discovered, and thus lose the spontaneity that made him good. If Picasso discovers the rooster, the world discovers it with him, and everybody begins painting roosters.

I heard this, or something like it, in a big city up near the Great Lakes where it was cold and raw and rainy, and where I couldn't think, except the thought: when I set out through the *Landscape With Blooming Tree*, I shall look around and into painting in Texas, and New Mexico, and Colorado, and into some I have seen from the North Country, and see if I can't contradict those statements.

At a lull in the rain we passed a place where an old seven-passenger car had driven off the elevated road and was lying, wheels in the air, on the grass below. Other cars had stopped to help, but all its eleven passengers had escaped injury, although the furniture lashed to its top and back had been completely crushed. It seemed a case of a 20 m.p.h. car doing 50.

"Airplanes are safer," said Peter as he came back and resumed his driving, and I, having expressed myself on that subject before, said nothing. I had been admonished not to put airplanes in his way on this trip, and refusing to discuss their relative safety was my way of conditioning us both to the stand I should have to take on the air fields.



## FLORIDA

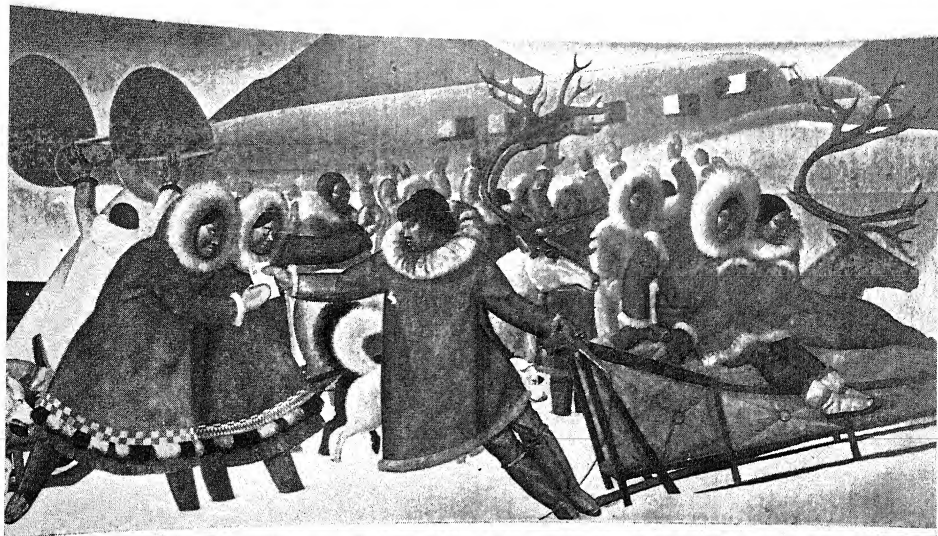
"Why don't artists ever paint airplanes?" he challenged, knowing my willingness to discuss art with him.

"Don't they?" I said. I could have said flippantly: "Picasso hasn't discovered them yet," but I didn't want him to get the idea we were entirely dependent on Paris for ideas.

"Nobody in Woodstock does."

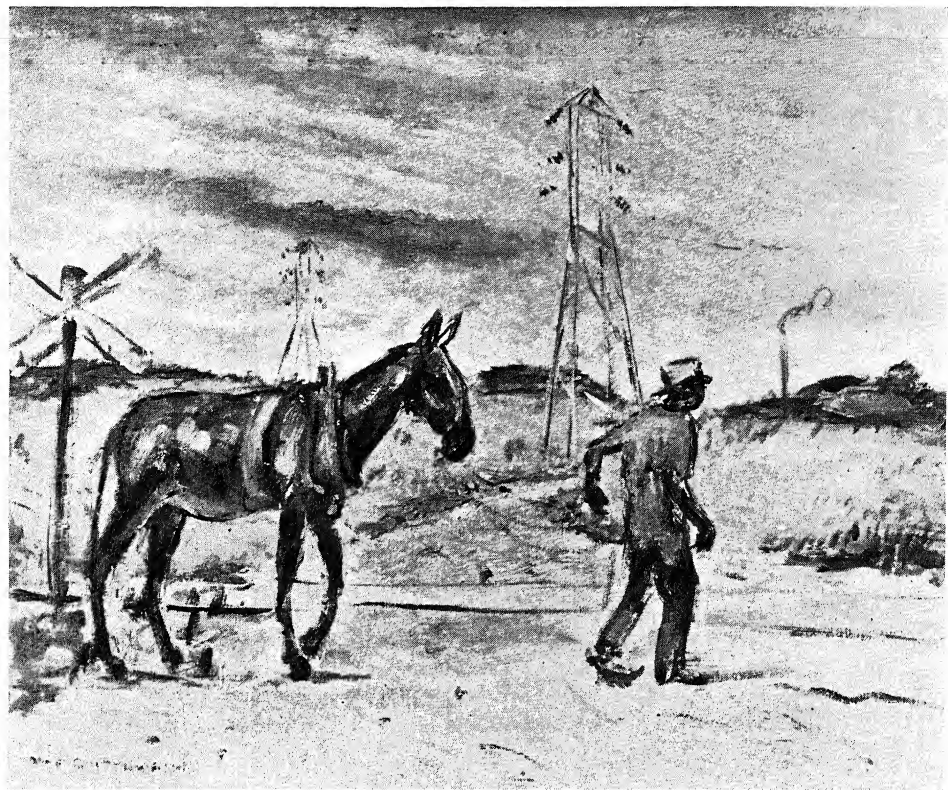
"That's what you know about it. But if you had come with me into the post office in Washington, I could have shown you two." The planes I was thinking of figured in Rockwell Kent's murals and made the background for Esquimaux and Negroes receiving mail from them. They would have been easier to see had the onlooker been able to step away from them without backing into a wall, and if they had been adequately illuminated. I added tentatively: "Perhaps the reason they are not used more in painting, is that the commercial artists got hold of them first and made strong and convincing symbols of them in advertising. So much so, that symbols of airplanes might make a canvas resemble an advertisement. It takes courage to do it. Automobiles are being used by a certain school of painting, but only outmoded models in states of disintegration, to symbolize society's shortcomings. An old dilapidated airplane in the front yard of an abandoned homestead would convey no meaning yet—any more than an old car would have done it thirty years ago. It takes time before expensive gadgets in dilapidated states can come to symbolize poverty. Mass production has to enter into it."

We followed a road that took us into and through a strip of Georgia. On leaving Florida we saw the earth turn red, and the vegetation become juicy with an infinite variety of greens. There was as much difference between the landscape of the two states as between a landscape by Seurat and one by Courbet, or between a landscape by Allen Tucker and one by George Inness.



*Mail Service in the Arctic*  
[Oil]

ROCKWELL KENT



*Negro and Mule*  
[Oil]

ANNE GOLDTHWAITE



WE DIPPED into Florida again and paid our respects to the Pensacola airport, and driving along the Old Spanish Trail entered Mobile. I was in Mobile in 1919 and hadn't liked it. I remembered yet stepping on two dead cats lying in the road, as I walked through the mud from the curb to the trolley car.

In the TOURIST where we stayed, I was awakened by a rat sitting on my pillow. It was no dream. The thud with which it struck the floor when I knocked it off was like nothing that happens in a dream.

I never loved American cities, but I never knew why until I read Lewis Mumford's *Culture of Cities*, and then I realized that what I had liked about certain European cities were memories from poems and novels about them—atmosphere rendered by writers, and wrapping itself around characters and situations I had come to love. Also memories of Dutch, English, and Italian paintings—cities I had come to see as their painters had seen them: Amsterdam, London, Venice. Should I ever see a European city again, I wonder, could I see it otherwise than as a potential target for a flyer from across the border?

On a visit to New York in the first decade of the century, I

## ALABAMA

used to see South Ferry and its passengers, and the big dray-horses with their ferocious drivers, in terms of Whitman—and I rather liked it. The rest of the city no one had sung about.

*O take my hand, Walt Whitman!  
Such gliding wonders! Such sights and sounds!  
Such joined unending links, each hooked to the next!  
Each answering all—each sharing the world with all.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*What do you hear, Walt Whitman?*

\* \* \* \* \*

*I hear the strong baritone of the 'long-shore-men of Mannhatta;  
I hear the stevedores unlading the cargoes, and singing;*

\* \* \* \* \*

*I behold the steam-ships of the world.—Salut au Monde.*



DRIVING across the little corridors that give Alabama and Mississippi access to the sea, you wonder at the manner in which the western border of the latter state—after peacefully having followed the run of the river—suddenly flies eastward as though Huey Long had said “Bool” to it, or as if it wanted to see what the mermaids in Pearl River looked like. And looking at maps and speaking of mermaids: the reason Florida has been given the Gulf coast of Georgia and a large piece of the Alabama coast, is so that Florida can extend in under the rest of the continent and be bolted on to it and stay put when the hurricanes blow. Otherwise Florida would look too much like a ripe banana—particularly if it is colored yellow as on my map—and might break off in a high wind. The bays of Apalachee and Pensacola are where the bolts were driven in, they say. And being on such subjects, here is the story the merman tells his children when they ask why they are different from the children on the earth: “God, feeling lonely, thought of making His own image in the clay of the earth. But the weak clay could not sustain His awful shape. When He blew His breath into it, it collapsed and lay on the

## MISSISSIPPI

earth grinning regret and apology up at God. And God stepped on its face and walked off the earth into space.

"But the clay had become alive by His touch, and in an attempt to sit up and see the One who had left the imprint of His heel on its visage, it broke completely to pieces. The pieces then began to squirm and crawl, and some crawled into the sea and became mermen, some flew into the air as elves, some burrowed into the earth as trolls, while that which remained lying, contorted into the shape of man. But one piece God had kept in His hand, and squeezing it out between His fingers, He had cursed it with His wish to make His own image. Of this clay came the artists."

The sky overhead was blue as we drove along the Gulf. All around the extensive horizon a wall of rain clouds lay piled up, and no matter how fast or far we travelled, we never reached the wall until the late afternoon, when it would suddenly grow and fall on top of us; which makes me think it must be related to the long horizontal clouds that gather low on the sky at sunset. I never was where those clouds are, and I never have met anybody who has been there.

Thirty of the hundred and seventy miles of Old Spanish Trail between Mobile and New Orleans run along a kind of Riviera. The Gulf, or rather Mississippi Sound to one side, and big villas in extensive gardens to the other. Looking at the villas I wondered what kind of pictures they had on the walls within. Looking at the water I gathered it was shallow, for long wooden bridges ran out to what I took to be boat or bath houses. Further out and beyond the horizon lay the keys, among which is Ship Island, of which I could draw a picture with my eyes closed, as it looked in 1905. That year I was anchored out there with a fourmasted bark. We were there for two months, changing the

deck cargo into the hold and the cargo below onto the deck, and every Sunday we rowed to Ship Island to wash clothes in the lukewarm water of a sulphur spring.

We had loaded the lumber in Gulfport, of which too I could draw a map as it looked then: one street, and an enormous wooden hotel, and a jail where they fed you nothing but beans. I wasn't there myself, but a fat shipmate was. When he came back after a month, we didn't recognize him until he showed us the naked "Louise" he had on his stomach, and she had got skinny too. I recall the crew of the ship wondering at Americans living in a mosquito-ridden, muddy town like that, when thousand of European emigrants were coming over each year to take possession of big wheat fields, prairies, Niagara, and the Brooklyn Bridge—all things we had seen on pictures.

I didn't know Gulfport again, when following route 90 we zig-zagged through it. The harbor in 1905 had been full of big square-riggers, and their masts had looked—no, not like a forest—I never could accept that simile. The sailing ship was the bloom of the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century was its prettiest on deep water. There never was another century like it.

Now there were no ships in Gulfport—and to tell the truth, I hadn't expected there would be. You don't expect to see a head on a decapitated man. Just the same, the sight is hard to get used to, if you have known him. Gulfport today can stand up beside any town its size. It has all the modern improvements: cement, filling stations, five-and-tens, chain stores—and is a place where Europeans might well wish to be and Americans to live.





DUE SOUTH of Ship Island lies the slender string of Chandeaur Islands, which Theodore Roosevelt set aside as a sanctuary for some of Louisiana's 397 different varieties of birds. I didn't see these islands, but having often looked at the work of Audubon, I suspect what I missed by not going there: the edition as originally intended by the master. About Audubon's birthplace there has been much controversy. Someone, misinterpreting a legend from France, even claimed that he swam over here from that country disguised as a dolphin.

Instead of driving to the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain and taking the ferry to New Orleans at Mandeville, where—it says on my road-map—Audubon was born, we took a road over marshes via big new bridges bearing Huey Long's cartouche.

The whole Mississippi delta, not to say the whole seaboard of Louisiana, must be, I imagine, like pages by Audubon, for here, one next to the other, to atone for their sins, people have established wild-life reservations: Rockefeller Foundation Refuge, Edward McIlhenny Refuge, Russell Sage Refuge, and some on which ink has been spilled and whose names I can't read.

In the midst of it all lies New Orleans, and with it, for better for worse, my business.

Viewed on a map, New Orleans lies as if in a nest made by a bend in the river.

Shaped like a seashell—like the right valve of a Venus clam with the *umbo* in Greenwood cemetery and the margin of growth towards the river, New Orleans via half a dozen ferries extends her tentacles southward into the delta. But if you want to cross by bridge, you'll have to drive out of town to the Huey P. Long Public Belt Bridge, and which I recommend you do, as from here you get an understanding of the landscape surrounding New Orleans, and you see how New Orleans lies—as it were—like a Venus clam in the bend of the river. You might find this comparison particularly apt, if, like us—or like one of us—you have just made the acquaintance down there of a little Southern girl as pretty as any Botticelli ever served on the half shell.

In the river itself I saw numbers of Negro boys bathing, and for a moment considered their heads bobbing in the surface as dots for the many letters *i* in Mississippi. Towards the north by the bank of Lake Pontchartrain the city has built a driveway with parking spaces for those who wish to go down the flight of stairs running along the lake and swim.

The lake is deep when you get out sufficiently far. There are neither sharks, mermaids, sea-serpents, or any other vermin in it, although, when I was here, a schooner, "*its topsails shot with fire*," was sloughing westward into the sunset. The lake's bottom where you can walk on it, consists of a pleasant, blueish mud. You feel it oozing up between your toes, but you don't see it until you put your feet back on the steps. The water is not cool,

## LOUISIANA

but when you are in it, you don't want to get out again and back to the city until the sun has set on a hot summer's day.

It was hot in New Orleans, and wearily we dropped into one of the many "Po-bois" for a po-boi sandwich, which is twelve inches of French bread split horizontally along its axis, buttered, salamiéd, toasted, and relished with a bottle of ice-cold coca-cola or beer.

"Why do they call these places 'Po-boi'?" he asked me, trying with his tone to draw a circle of privacy around us while we ate.

In a similar tone I answered, that in so far as it was spelled with an *i*, I surmised it came from the French *pour boire*—a place to drink.

But the madame of the establishment, who kindly seemed to realize we were two menfolks away from the one who naturally would correct us, and as such must be considered under her care while at her place, and who had made the sandwiches and therefore ought to know, and who was born in Oklahoma, but had lived three years with her husband's people in New Jersey, and who would like to go back to Oklahoma—this madame had heard his question and my answer, and volunteered now the information that "Po-boi" meant "Pooh boy" which was the Negro way of saying "Poor boy," and that they called the sandwich that, because it was all poor people could afford by way of lunch.

While she talked I visualized again the heads of the Negroes swimming in the river, and thought some of them might be used as periods in this woman's speech. Before she started, I had read her words in her superior, kind eyes, for I had also surmised how easily that interpretation might suggest itself to people from Oklahoma, who etc.—But I could do nothing about it. We thanked her, paid her, and left.

The Southern States Art League has its headquarters in New Orleans, and when seeing it announced that I was "preparing a book on the United States, giving particular emphasis to art throughout the country," its secretary, Miss Ethel Hutson, had written me, generously offering me help and information in my survey, that the South might be adequately represented.

On the receipt of this letter I had been told by the one I left behind that I would rather write about sea-serpents and mermaids, but that now I couldn't help myself. I hadn't answered, except by way of agreeing I had quoted T. S. Eliot:

*" . . . sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown  
Till human voices wake us, and we drown."*

The Southern States Art League centered in New Orleans has its organization spread all over the Southern states as far as and including Washington, D.C., and Texas. It holds its All Southern Art Exhibitions annually in the larger cities of the South, conferring this honor on such as can give it adequate accommodation.

My impression of the League is that of a well-ordered, well-functioning network of arteries and veins which, with New Orleans as its heart, distributes art appreciation and art intelligence all over the South. By sending out exhibitions it gives each section in turn a chance to see what all other sections are doing with the Southern theme.

As—unfortunately—I wasn't able to see one of these comprehensive annuals, I am not in a very good position to pronounce on the quality of the blood pumped out through these arteries. I do not know if there is any evidence of regionalism in these All Southern exhibitions, or if anything suggesting a feeling for states' rights in art might be said to exist. My very haz-

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ardous guess, judging from photographs and reproductions and from some of such paintings as I did see, would be that a Virginian painting Spanish moss in Florida, magnolias in Louisiana, and bluebonnets in Texas, could not easily be told from an Alabaman painting the same things in the same or different states. My guess would be, without pronouncing on the quality of the blood, that it belongs to one big, happy family, and that it is not apt to clot in any of the cities through which it courses. My guess, accordingly, is that Southern art, *as represented by these exhibitions*, will show a kind of Southern confederacy through its subjects, while through its approach it will prove itself related to that part of the painting world which has its roots in French impressionism.

Although it has always been my contention that even if one may disagree with a viewpoint towards art when expressed in words, one may agree with it when expressed in paint—and of course, vice versa; even though that has been my stand, I shall here, as I am unable to speak of the League's aim by analyzing its work, quote from the address by the League's late president, Dr. Ellsworth Woodward, H.M.A.I.A., on the occasion of the League's 17th annual convention:

It is said of us that we express in our art an all-prevailing nostalgia for a civilization that is gone; that the Negro, the magnolia, and the poetic symbols of ante-bellum living obsess us to the exclusion of actualities. If this be true in some measure, it is by no means the whole picture. Indeed, some of our ardent youngsters have aggressive elbows out, seeking the bubble reputation in the so-called American Scene, forgetting, I fear, as some of the brethren elsewhere do, that the American Scene is not without beauty and hope.

On second thought, what is wrong with the magnolia? Is it not regally beautiful? What is wrong with our colored brother as a subject? Is he not picturesque and for that matter is he not a factor in the American Scene? If old tradition beckon and fill many a canvas, is it not possible because

some of us still preserve a preference for beauty? The factory chimney and the modern slum, however truly with us, need not wholly displace white pillared mansions and rose gardens . . .

I am all for the American Scene, but refuse to believe that the Scene implies commonplace vulgarity, nor can I be brought to think that bad drawing and slatternly technique lend the Scene any charm . . .

My friends of the League, we started in our career with the high purpose of bringing together the best that our section can produce. We have but partially succeeded. We have not yet enrolled all our best artists. This is a subject for regret.

Under the kind and untiring auspices of the League I was shown the work of several New Orleans artists, the Isaac Delgado Museum of Art, the art activities of Newcomb College for Women, and the New Orleans School of Art conducted by the local Arts and Crafts Club.

Confronted with all this Will to Express in Art, I felt my inferiority, and wondered if in my wish to tackle the job, I hadn't bitten off too much. I began to doubt if I should be able to make the illuminating and inclusive book on art all this activity seemed to demand. An urge for autobiography came back and a longing to fly out to sea and visit with the Midgaards Worm.

And I began to wonder about the teaching of art. I had never taught art myself, but once upon a time I had been taught history. Aside from a few dry facts so unattractively presented that my memory balked at retaining them, I was taught attitudes, so attractively presented that to this day I store their images in the wax cabinet of my heart—although they never led to anything but hatred and contempt for other nations and a spurious pride in my own.

From what I have seen of art and history teaching where I have been, I would, if I were to teach art, teach facts. Fact about materials and in somewhat the manner the New York W.P.A.'s

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research laboratory presents them in its bulletins. I should teach you how to keep your tools clean and pliable as those facts have come down through the years, and about which is written a minimum of buncombe. And if I could teach nobody to paint, I might teach someone how to look at pictures—or to have the pictures look at them: stand before the one you like and let its emanations make a better person of you. And when you have looked at each other, don't expend the benefit you derive by exclaiming. Go away quietly and "sin no more," as the fellow said.

And I might teach my class an inclusive, terse, and uncontradictable definition of Beauty, if I thought it warranted it. But first I would let it commit itself to definitions of its own, for it behooves pupils to eat crow.

Once on my trip I came into an art school somewhere, and was shown an exhibition of pupils' work. One wall was hung with about a hundred charcoal drawings of all imaginable subjects. "One-year students," said the head. On another wall hung oils: "Two- and three-year students! And this student here had never painted a stroke until she came to us!" said the head.

"Unbelievable!" I said. And it was.

I left that exhibition rather depressed and somewhat at sea. For—to tell the truth—I had myself tried to put ideas on paper in coal and color, and I knew how hard it was to get something down I would want to stand—and here students of one, two, and three years' standing had gotten away with it and were holding exhibitions. It worried me. Was art, then, something anyone with a flair for it could pick up in a couple of years?

It struck me then, how once I had made a series of half-tone portraits to illustrate a book. The publisher didn't want to go to the expense of reproducing half-tones, wherefore I made them

over into line drawings, and in doing so came to realize that without my embroiderings and my tricky, assured-looking smudges I couldn't put myself across. With the simple, difficult mean of line drawing I just wasn't there—and the saving idea struck me: what would this exhibition of pupils' work have been without shortcuts, and tricks, and smudges pretending to a knowledge which only years of hard work can give? What would it have been if the students had been obliged to show their knowledge of anatomy and the subtlety of form through a line drawing?

But then, had I any quarrel with this? Were these young people being taught to make a living in a big city, or were they being taught an ideal? I have in my files a letter from a writer's magazine in which it says: "*. . . writing is not only an art but a trade . . . and there are tricks to it, and our magazine can teach you to master these fine points . . .*"

In a discussion on art later on my trip, I started telling a painter about the above exhibition: "Smudges," I said, "and shortcuts." I shall always remember the sensible and quiet way he met me. Inadvertently I had spoken to the man who was the teacher of those students. "I am not teaching them shortcuts," he said. "I look upon it as the building up of a three-sided pyramid: all three sides have to go up at once—drawing, composition, color. One thing with the other two. The students take an interest in this they couldn't take in continuous line drawing. They have results to look at and to encourage them."

Under the circumstances I thought I had said plenty and said no more. My still unassuaged doubts I referred to my previous questionmark: is art something one can pick up in a couple of years?



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When asking if anybody had painted the Louisiana marshes, with their live oaks and Spanish moss, I was made acquainted with old man Drysdale, deceased. What I heard about him made him into a rather likable symbol of Louisiana Bohemia. I was told he was fond of looking at the mule when it was white, and that he referred euphemistically to his pictures as "pot-boilers," and sold them for as little as fifty cents apiece to make his hypothetical pot boil. His medium was neither oil nor water but kerosene; and his tools or tool was a shaving brush, as with that he found it easier to render Spanish moss and the general lushness of the Louisiana landscape. After he had wrapped up his spiritual belongings and given—I presume—a last look at the marshes and glided westward, a big New Orleans department store acquired his work and honored it by putting glass and frames around it and placing it on view—and thither I went to see it.

It is hard for any picture—I don't care whose—to hold its own against the glass and frame a department store puts around it. As there doesn't seem to be a very great market for these paintings, you can, I believe, to this day go there and see them. If you are able to imagine them without the furniture reflections and in a frame of your own choosing, you might see more than kerosene and shaving brush explain. And afterwards you might even be able to see the marshes as Drysdale at one time or another must have seen them. There might be others, or there might have been others, who made paintings of the marshes, but his are the only ones I saw, or remember seeing.

When from the department store I came back to my car, I found its New York licence had attracted the attention of a professional guide, who then had posted himself by it. I saw him first, though, and tried to slip my key into the door before he

should have a chance to tackle me. But I had tried the trunk key, and while I made the change he laid his hand on my arm and asked if he might not show me New Orleans.

### THE STORY ABOUT HOW YOU ENTERED THE GUIDE'S BUBBLE

Once upon a time I read a book, which, if memory serves, was called *Les Demi Vierges*, in which a fat old quadrone lady from the French West Indies took her beautiful daughters to Paris with a view to procuring rich husbands for them. The young Creoles soon picked up Parisian *savoir faire*, but Mama never got over her Martinique conditioning. Among the things she had with her from the tropics was a frightful canary-yellow silk gown into which she'd slip and then make a grand *entré* when her daughters' friends had called. To save themselves from the mortification, the young ladies were forever plotting to prevent her from putting on that gown.

Dr. Sigmund Freud, or somebody, says we all have such a canary-yellow gown which we want to put on against the better judgment of those who love us. I have found some evidence of this in my friends, who in return claim to be pained when I start on what they call my "Bubble Concept." But as I think it is a very good concept, I shall introduce it here, where I can demonstrate it on this guide who wants to show me New Orleans, which I don't want to see anyway from his angle.

For the sake of making things clear to myself I have been obliged to visualize the universe around me as a kind of bubble suspended on my awareness, and to treat it with some consideration, and as though it really were there. Few of the individuals I see running about inside my bubble agree with me on anything in it, which fact has obliged me further to imagine everybody as having a universe bubble of his own suspended on his or her awareness.

These many and different world conceptions can intersect without breaking, and if you can make yours concentric with any other, you will find yourself in complete agreement with its owner. This, of course, rarely happens, but you may at any time, almost, be able to tangent his at one point, and come to a semblance of understanding with him of one thing at a time. Each race and nation in turn has its own peculiar bubble, and from reading the daily headlines, you can see in how far these nationalistic world images fail to coincide.

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It is, however, possible to transpose your awareness for a little while to the center of other people's universes. And if you can do it without being too overcome at the sight you get of yourself from that viewpoint, you might find it an enlightening experience. As you further might be fatigued from looking at art, you might find it a relaxation and really get some fun from being within this somewhat tough and crudely furnished universe within which you *hereby* find yourself:

It is the bubble of the guide who wants to show you New Orleans. Your awareness is in the center, side by side with his, and—now watch! That there in a Palm Beach suit by the blue car, that's you, as you look in the guide's bubble—and you don't look so hot.

"New Orleans?" you exclaim. Why, you are in the midst of it. How can he show you New Orleans? Does he think you are a sucker?

His eyebrows fly upwards, because he sees you are his meat. He laughs. There is more to New Orleans than the Jackson Avenue on which you stand.

You don't have to use words. Your license plate and something in your face combine to imply that you have been in bigger cities than this one.

The guide measures you. Have you seen the *Vieux Carré*?

Those fellows can read faces like nobody in the world. Instantly he reads in yours resentment at having been caught not knowing French. He translates: "The Old French Quarter?"

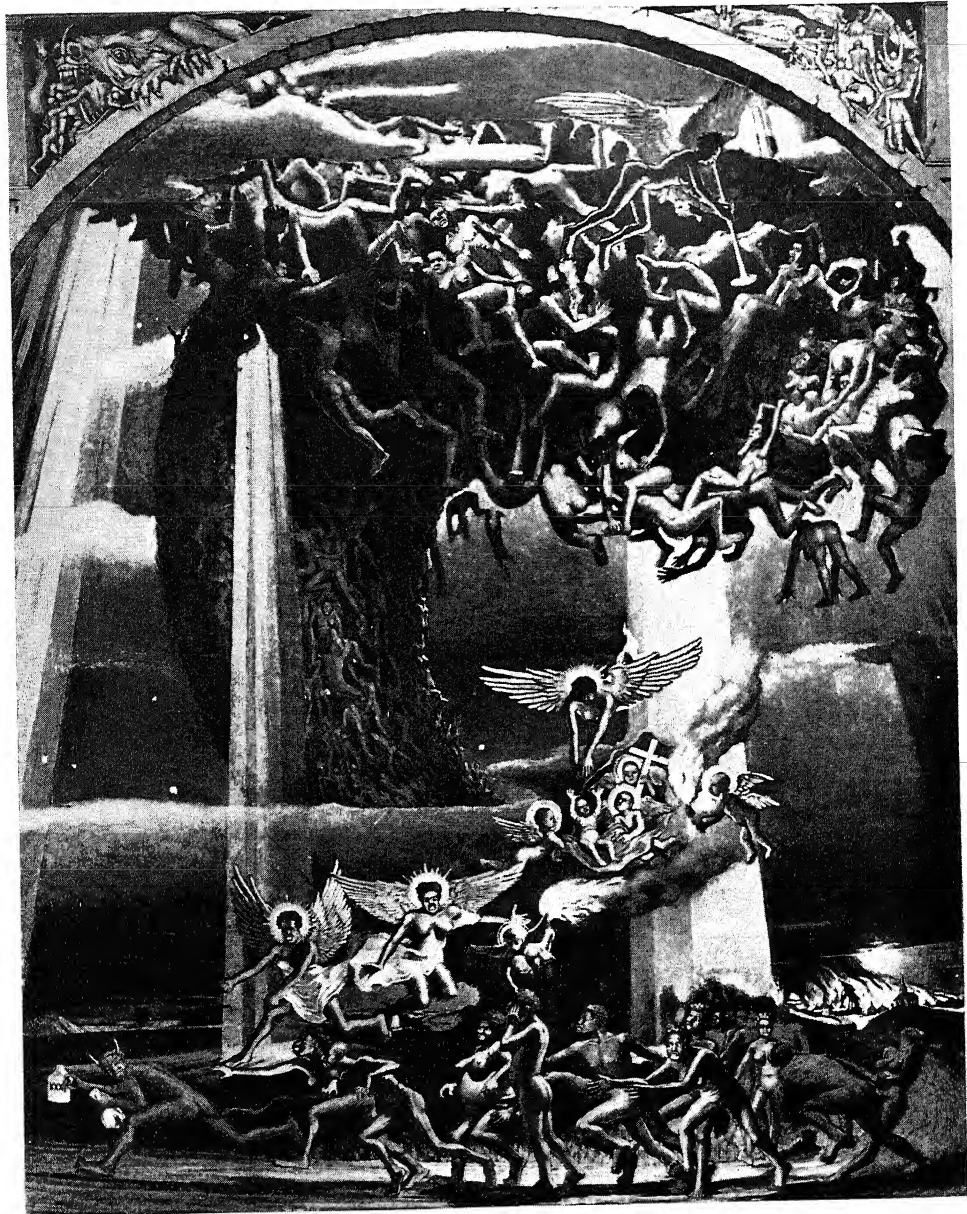
It is your turn to smile: As though you hadn't been there! A street full of sucker traps. Antiques and junk. Branches of Madison Avenue concerns. You can buy that stuff cheaper in New York where they don't charge for fake Old South patina. You are not interested.

The old French buildings, he cajoles you. Hundred years old! Homes that belonged to old New Orleans families. He can take you places you would never find yourself if you looked a year.

Sentimentalist that you are, you now withdraw into your own bubble. Your nostalgia for a fragrance you have come to suspect from pictures and books refuses to be appeased by shells from which the original life has fled and now being commercialized by people whose values are twentieth-century baubles.

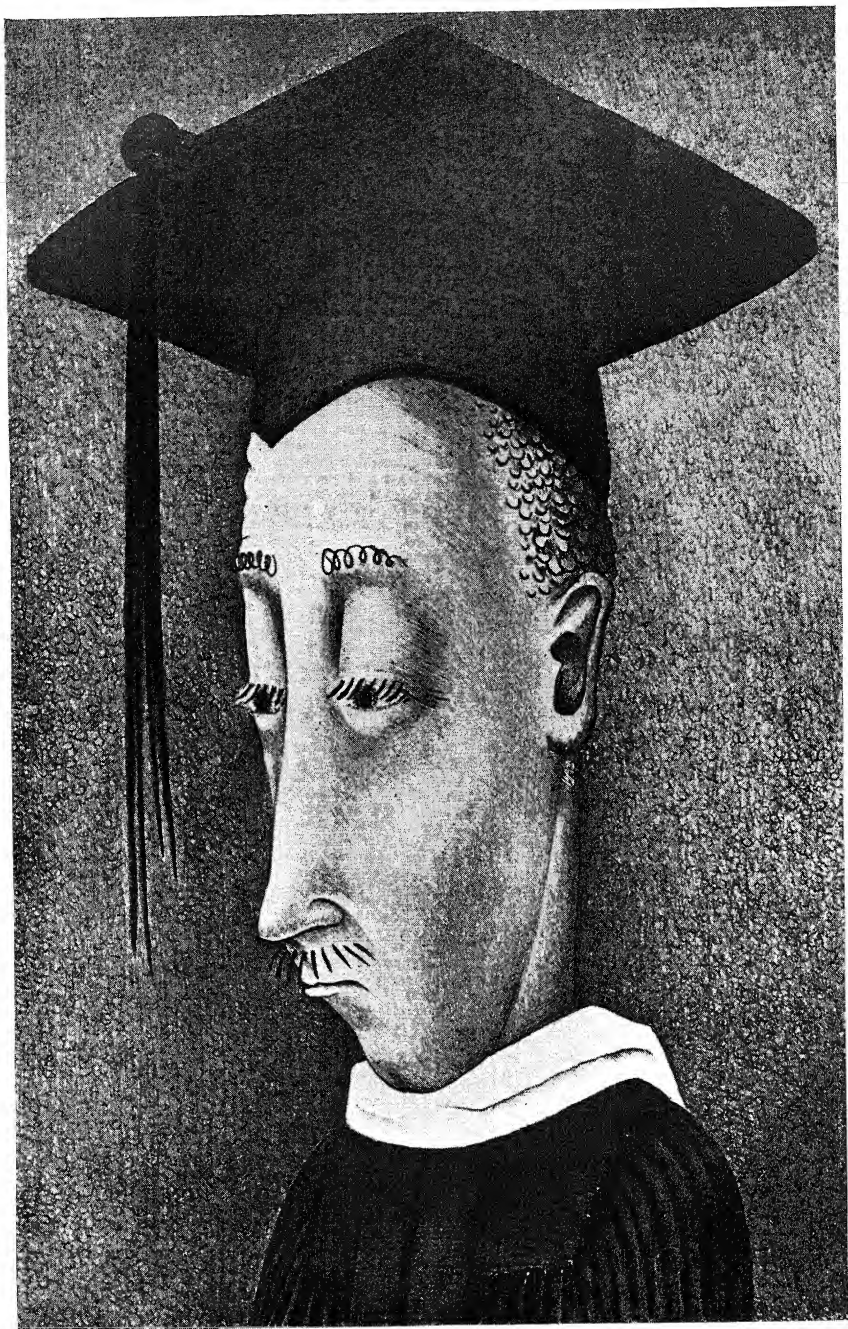
The guide, feeling you slipping away from him, now tries his last shot—and it might be just as well that you have left his bubble, for that to which he now appeals is your Id, and such as he sees that, you had better not look.

But, even as guides you recall from Paris, this one has made a mistake:



*Judgment Day*  
[Oil]

JOHN MC CRADY



*Academic Portrait*  
[Lithograph]

CAROLINE DURIEUX

Yours is not that kind of an Id. You have never been really suppressed. Like myself, you are more Ego than Id. Much more! Actually you feel a little sorry for the guide, his sparsely furnished universe, and his vain endeavor trying to make a living out of you. "Have you any pornographic photographs?" asks your Id to humor him.

You too can read faces, and now you read in the guide's how he is kicking himself for not having brought them. He makes you promise you'll be here, in this spot, tomorrow at this same hour; and you trust—in fact you feel perfectly convinced—that life has immunized him to such disappointment as hereby he becomes due for. You don't mind taking advantage of the lessons experience has taught him, even if you don't want to initiate him.

(We call that kind of writing "Visiting with the Midgaards Worm.")

I was due at the Isaac Delgado Museum of Art and found it located in a park and approached by a splendid avenue of live oaks inside which—as in a Mother Goose song about it—was another splendid avenue of royal palms, and there might be room for yet another.

The museum contained extensive collections of bronzes, silver, porcelain, paintings, statues, lace, etc. etc., and I was kindly taken from item to item and shown it all, and this, I believe, is the reason why I now recall it as an Arabian Night's dream, with nothing standing out in my memory except a little wood interior by Diaz, and a head carved in oak and humorously placed in the center of a large, round radiator. I failed to ascertain the name of the carver, but, considering the pleasure I got from it, I'd rather be the custodian of that head than of anything else in the museum.

On the way out I discovered a painting showing a big sailing ship being whipped through the seas by a following gale. "Who did that?" I asked.

Miss Hutson, who knew the lore of everything in here, then told me it was by the Swedish painter and seafarer, Bror Anders

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Wikstrom, who for many years designed the New Orleans carnivals. Surprized that a Swedish skipper should be the one to do this, I was further told that the man who had done it before him had also been a Swede, but of whom no one knew much, not even the name.

When I inquired into the life and activities of Wikstrom, the museum furnished me with a sheaf of typewritten extracts prepared by its W.P.A. workers from papers, magazines, and catalogues of long ago, and from the writings of Dr. Ellsworth Woodward.

Reading these I saw Wikstrom emerge from a Selma Lagerlöf setting of a medieval manor of stone and oak in the midst of a vast estate governed by a patriarchal father, who insisted on discipline and a classical education, albeit tempered with much music. Nevertheless, Bror ran away to sea.

But, like the boy in the song, he returned after at an early age having risen to be commander. He left the sea and studied art in Stockholm and at the Julien school in Paris, came to New Orleans in 1883 and painted there until his death in 1900. He was one of the founders of the New Orleans Artists' Association of 1885, and taught painting for nothing. His *atelier* was decorated in the Parisian style of the time with armor, hangings, ornamented furniture, and rugs, among which he slept in a sailor's hammock and smoked a huge pipe "solely for pleasure." He told of long voyages around the Horn, and of adventures among inaccessible rocks in the South Pacific. In 1890 he was host to George Inness. He designed the carnival floats and worked hard at it, and when the carnival was over took a trip to Mexico or the West Indies to recuperate and to paint. Such was the life of a New Orleans artist during the last two decades of last century. Aside from several paintings he is represented in

the Delgado Museum by a mahogany chest on which he carved dolphins, seaweed, and mermaids.

Modern primitives? I had seen a show of them in the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and on my trip through the states I came upon three of whom I learned the names and saw the output. Aside from these I found evidence of a great many more on the walls of tourist bedrooms all over the country in north, south, east, and west.

From what little I know of the origin of the sophisticated (?) interest in modern primitives, I gather it started in Paris with Appollinaire's enthusiasm for Rousseau le Douanier, and although I myself can get a thrill from these primitives, I cannot help but think that Appollinaire in his more soul-searching moments must have shaken his head and thought: "*Quel scamp que je suis!*"—for after all—

"What makes a primitive?"

"Lack of sophistication," you'll say.

I'll let you off giving a definition of sophistication, and ask: "What else?"

"Naïveté."

"How do you define naïveté?"

"Well—it's the opposite of sophistication. It's a sort of unawareness of the ways of the world."

"O.K."

In New Orleans I was shown the works of Charles W. Hutson, who had taken up painting in his sixty-fifth year and painted until he died ninety-six years old. By no standard of what goes to make a sophisticate could this man be called naïve or a primitive: born in 1840 in South Carolina and educated in the college of that state, he entered the army of the Confederacy in 1860,



was wounded in the first battle of Manassas, taken prisoner at Seven Pines, exchanged, and finished the war serving in the Beaufort artillery. After the surrender he studied law and was admitted to the bar in South Carolina. For forty years he taught languages and history in schools and universities throughout the South, wrote a number of books, was made an honorary doctor, and contributed verse and prose to many periodicals. On retiring from teaching in 1908 he devoted his time to writing and painting.

I saw his work before I knew his biography, and saw, or thought I saw—at any rate I interpreted what I saw as the workings of a mind unaware of the ways of the world; a ferocious, but incapable longing for expression; a primitive's wish to express beauty in nature, or the beauty of a vision tormenting him as in his helpless *Trial of Joan of Arc* or *The Princess Badoura's Air Flight*; a Jacob's fight with his vision, or with his inability to put it on canvas. Where the primitive came in was in the fact that he thought he had won the fight: he had signed the pictures and put frames around them.

I then learned about his life, and I was told that he had wanted to paint nature as he saw it, i.e. photographically with a touch of sentiment, but that his failing eyesight was a hindrance to this, as also was his finding it difficult to tell between the colors green and blue. The result was altogether different from what one imagines he would have wanted to paint. Without his biography it was an American primitive. With it, I am not prepared to say what it was.

I was further told that although he had no admiration for the modernistic type of painting, he was claimed by the younger artists as a "modern," because his work was "broad, free, and daring, and significant in pattern." One of his canvases was

awarded the Blanche S. Benjamin prize of 1925 for the best Louisiana landscape by a jury of New York artists and critics "who knew so little of the painter that they insisted he 'must be a young man of not over twenty' on account of the 'crude vigor and promise of his work.'" (*The Times Picayune New Orleans State*, July 9, 1933.)

Perhaps this painter of the Louisiana landscape is in a class by himself. Here I saw cypress swamps and Louisiana lushness painted with now and then bits of primaries giving dramatic effects—but I couldn't help wondering if I brought as much drama and humor to these pictures as I bring to those of children, or to a window pane full of ice flowers. And I wondered if an exhibition of these pictures could be anything but misleading if not accompanied by a biography of the painter. And if so accompanied, what would they mean? And as for the show in the Museum of Modern Art: those moderns were primitive in their technique mainly. For real, unadulterated and savage naïveté see the murals in the Russian building in the New York World's Fair.

When the sun had set I was taken to call on various New Orleans painters and saw work as I hadn't seen it since I was up north. I was being put in touch with a modern, critical, and yet humorous comment on American society in general and the South and New Orleans in particular. I was shown the work by John McCrady and by Caroline Durieux.

Humor in art? I wonder how far intended humor may be permitted to permeate art. Unintended, when owing to an innocent point of view, may, I take it, be permitted to reach and even to sit on the very throne as in Breughel's *Child Murder in Bethlehem*.

One of my attitudes which, so far, I haven't reasoned about,

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hence never seen fit to apologize for, is that humor in painting should confine itself to anything outside oil, and that it may barely be permitted in etching. If I analyze this attitude, I find I owe it to my early bringing up: oil was a lasting medium in which to show man's more noble aspirations—even as the church and not the circus was the place to show it. Or as marble and bronze and not soap and rubber were the media for sculpturally expressing courage or gratitude or any other noble manifestation of the soul.

Other things being equal—which of course they never are—I can linger in front of, and fill my soul with the emanations from *Washington Crossing the Delaware* as it used to hang in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. But I could never stand before a *Mickey Mouse Crossing the Delaware* done in oil to the same scale for longer than one good guffaw.

It is indeed much easier to slough along on one's early conditionings than critically to evaluate them. But when you see how last generation's concepts have led us into all sorts of back alleys and traps, and when you are beset with a wish to turn over stones to see what is under them, your line of least resistance does not lie in a rut.

The pictures that made me turn over stones in the above manner were capable and good-looking oils showing, in McCrady's case, the life and superstitions of Southern Negroes, and in Miss Durieux's, tourists buying souvenirs in the *Vieux Carré*, fat and lean priests officiating, and other human beings bent on other forgivable human foibles—all seen through an eye into which has entered a splinter of the famous mirror that shivered with laughter when reflecting human beatitudes, and burst into a million fragments when confronted with the highest human ideal: God.

Peggy Bacon and Mabel Dwight put what they see on paper, or copper, or stone. Seeing things pointedly seems to be pre-eminently a woman's gift. The witty social comment by Caroline Durieux that I saw in New Orleans was put on canvas—small canvases, indeed, 20 x 30 or thereabouts, and among them were some to indicate that Caroline Durieux could well afford to limit her wit to paper, stone, and copper, and use her canvas for rendering peasant women and working people, the which, just now, may not be treated with levity.

I used to live in Europe when caricature and satire were still able to find the modicum of civilization necessary for their functioning and survival. That was on the tail-end of the interval between the Congress of Vienna and the beginning of the Great War. Even Japan in those days was amenable to the civilizing influence of irony and the satirical press. As we find the world today there is no call for satire. A kind of hangman's humor might not be out of place, but trying to restrain the forces at large by satire would be a theme for the burlesque, and making caricatures of them would be like making caricatures of caricatures.

Perhaps humor is not the hangman's because of qualities inherent in it. Perhaps it is the setting which makes it so. Any humor reflecting world conditions today is made into hangman's humor by those conditions. Perhaps hangman's humor might be defined as humor which has ceased to have any restraining or other civilizing influence, and has become humor for humor's sake—like the joke a man overboard bubbles into the sea as he sinks.

It is difficult to keep out of writing—even of writing on art—one's grief at seeing an epoch hospitable to the graces, as was even the one above, come and go and leave us with what we

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have. Yet, as it is, and because it would be the easier job, I'd rather defend than prosecute a dictator, and for the same reason I would rather defend than prosecute his assassin, as I would, also, rather defend than prosecute Ægir should he suddenly make a sea where now is the Reich. Perhaps it might be better for the world if the Baltic washed the northern slope of the Alps —if the left bank of the Rhine were a sea-side resort, and the Sudeten a danger to navigation.

Our time in New Orleans was up, although, as I had been told, giving only four days to a city with the art activities of New Orleans was ridiculous. My companion had had the freedom of the car while we had been here, and a friend had been guiding him about. Together they had been at the airport, where he had seen some murals. "I don't think they are very good," he had told me on an occasion when I had expressed a wish to go and see them. "I know you wouldn't like them."

Through his denunciation I saw his ulterior motive: he wanted the car to take somebody swimming in Lake Pontchartrain, and the outcome was that I didn't see the murals. Leaving New Orleans he suddenly remembered I hadn't seen them: they weren't really so bad, and he thought I oughtn't to miss them. Through his recommendation I saw his ulterior motive: he wanted me to meet a flier who was down here on a visit, and who had a flying school up north. O.K., we went to the airport to see the murals.

Before we could get out of the car the flier came up to my window and was introduced. As a flier he was not prepossessing. A fragrance of liquor was about him, and he spoke with large, loose gestures. He bated his breath when he said "college education," and used the term: "gentleman and scholar." He wanted

to sign up the youngster for a term at his school, and when he heard we had come to see the murals he called them "great art" and offered to take us to them.

But time was getting on, and we had to be in New Iberia before dark—so much to my regret, we had to renounce seeing them.

As we drove off the field, my companion, with more enthusiasm and conviction than I at this late day am able to give to any thing, said: "He is a swell guy!"

"He certainly is," I said, summoning every ounce of deceit I own into my voice to make it sound convinced.

As a boy I learned by heart a poem called "The Storm." It was about a ship's captain, who, as his ship sinks, lifts his young son above his head. The last lines were:

*"Then sank an arm. The other also sank.  
And no more life was there.  
Silent sat Death upon the silent waters."*

The grand manner—but now and then I recall those stanzas, when for the nonce I try to lift him above the disillusionment which eventually will engulf him also.

We crossed the Mississippi via Huey's bridge, and drove along route 90 marked "O.S.T.," which means *cheese* in Danish and which puzzled me as to what it stood for here. Perhaps you know: Old Spanish Trail.

The landscape was lush and rich and green. We drove along canals, or they might have been small rivers, on the opposite banks of which I saw human life that came as near to my idea of Paradise as anything I have seen on this earth. If I weren't writing a book in answer to a fondly imagined "*Q'avez vous vu?*" I wouldn't mention it, for on this score I resent being contradicted

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by those who know better, and who can see deplorable social significance in what here I thought looked like Paradise.

"Slow down," I said. "I want to look."

Perhaps 25 m.p.h. is the speed for looking at this vista. Perhaps any vista has its own critical number of m.p.h. Perhaps even Paradise comes under the law of relativity. Across the canal and along its bank were Negro shacks, shingled roofs, each with a porch, weathered and looking silvery in the fierce noon light they were facing. Around them were chinaberry trees and moss-hung oaks and what appeared to be little gardens, and never a sign-board nor a bit of advertising anywhere. It looked unnatural. Color, other than green, was furnished by calico, either on clothes lines or on the women house-choring about the places. Black children were playing everywhere; you could hear their laughter across the water. Above it all the blue sky vaulted enormously with white tufts of cotton stuck here and there. Shark steaks! Dice! Banjos! Song and Laughter! Let me be reincarnated a Louisiana Negro, owning the shadow of a china-berry tree.

Driving through flat marsh and farm lands we came to New Iberia in the afternoon. In this town lives Weeks Hall, whom I had been told to call on by people in New York, Savannah, and New Orleans, and on whom I did make a call. Any one who has seen the movie *Toy Wife* will know what his place looks like, for a replica of it was built in Hollywood to give a setting for landed Louisiana aristocracy of the 1840's. Weeks Hall is the last descendant of the man who long ago built this house. He has deeded it to the United States, and the gift has been accepted, as well it might. It is a red brick house of two stories with white columns in front. It lies in the midst of a Louisiana verdure of azaleas, oaks, and camelias. A stream runs through the gardens,

and it is encircled by an impenetrable bamboo copse and has three padlocked gates.

It is called "The Shadows" and is an oasis for artists on their way going west or coming east, and a bourse for exchange of ideas current in American and European art. As I visited with the owner over a cup of black coffee, he asked me to send to him such people as I thought he might want to see, and who might want to see him.

Discussing French influences, I told him of a *Portrait of Picasso* by Gertrude Stein which I had heard on a wonderfully resonant phonograph in Macon, Ga. In trying to describe it, I fell into speaking about my thoughts of French spice makers in painting, and suggesting there might be spice purveyors in literature as well. Our talk drifted into the realm of books and out of the realm with which I am here concerned—nevertheless, I should like to pick out bits from the discussion and tell about the bark *Three Sisters* running across the Atlantic on the northeast trades.

I was a passenger on board and slept aft. I used to stand on the weather side of the poop and argue with the skipper. If she rolled we would hang on to the shrouds and argue, and if it rained we would have on oilskins and argue, but in the evening there would often be a red sunset over the starboard bow, and the skipper would gaze into it and never say a word until the last glow was out of the sky.

At times he would complain strangely about his not being able to emulate his carpenter, who was religious and read the Bible: "That man will be in the dumps. Then he'll get out his Bible. Sit on the hatch there. You've seen him. He'll read. Then he'll look up at the wind pump. Sit and stare at it. And after a while he'll smile. You've seen it—like a fool. I can't make it out.



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I have a Bible myself. Old prophets ranting against the Hebrews' adultery. Christ making miracles. St. Paul telling the gentiles they had better marry than 'burn.' How can that make anyone smile? What is there to it?"

The skipper went on to tell how the seaman's mission in Philadelphia had given him a couple of books explaining what the Bible was all about. The word he used about them is the one for which people ashore substitute the word *tripe*. He had thrown them into the sea.

I had seen expressions in the skipper's face when he looked at the sunset, or at the breeze playing in his royals when lying by-the-wind; expressions that would fetch twenty-nine dollars in any temple were the carpenter's worth a denier. I suggested to him that he was—so to speak—in touch with the fountain-head and didn't have to drink bottled water. I recall saying: "You sleep with the damsel every night, Captain, you don't want her to write letters to you." I recall his smile at my parable, but I never could get him over his nostalgia for getting a lift like the carpenter's from reading the Bible.

A couple of years later I read in the *Herald* the ship had been lost. The ice patrol had found its lifeboat adrift on the North Atlantic.

Later I came upon *Finnegan's Wake*, which, had the skipper been alive I should have sent him, as from that he might have got the lift he envied the carpenter. For I imagine the beatific smile the carpenter squandered on the wind pump was not one owing to the comfort he got from the Bible, but a reflection of the sense of his own worth, his defense alchemy conjured up within him on a background of what to him was unintelligible nonsense, finely printed, withal, and bound in calf.

And although I cannot be sure the captain would have

treated it as it surely deserves, I would also have sent him *An Exagmination of James Joyce—A Dozen Experts Analyze Phases Of Joyce's "Work in Progress."* (New Direction Publ. \$2.00)

Driving into one of Mark Twain's Mississippi sunsets we came to the town of Lafayette. It had been a long and tiring drive, and when we came to a stop on the square in front of a sign bearing the town's name, Peter let his arms sink.

"Never mind saying it," I said—but he said it anyway:

"Lafayette, \* \* \* \* \*

As a punishment we found that somebody had said it before us: the American Legion was having a convention in Lafayette, and every bed was taken. We drove through what remained of the sunset to Opelousas, and continued next morning to Baton Rouge.

It was Sunday in Baton Rouge, and a day for sight seeing. People from outlying districts and tourists from everywhere had parked in the spaces provided for visitors in the formal gardens laid out beneath the city hall, which is a white skyscraper looking enormous on the flat land. Driving about, looking for a place to park, we saw license plates from every state in the Union. We too wanted to see Huey Long's bronze coffin, but, like the rest, found it had been placed in a crypt in the gardens and covered with a cement slab on which stood six little vases with dead flowers.

When I want to make up my mind about Huey Long, I find it hard. There is the Lake Drive in New Orleans, cement roads, and splendid bridges on the one hand, and on the other, gambling machines thick as flies all over Louisiana, and a vivid memory of relief when I heard he had died. I don't know what to think, but if the conversation ever lags in the Delta, all you

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have to do is to say, "Huey Long"—and of how many can that be said?

We went into the city hall and looked about. In my notes it says: "The murals are bad, but hard to see. The statuary outside less so in either way."

An elevator took us to the top of the skyscraper, from where we had a clear, wide view of the Mississippi, the city, and the surrounding country for miles. Looking, I came to realize from how many places this skyscraper can be seen, and how—resembling a lifted finger—at one time it must have served to remind people of what was good for them.

The thing to do if one wishes to have sights explained, is to find a native son who is proud of his city and eager to tell a stranger about it. And if the stranger remembers that he is being looked for in the crowd, even harder than he is looking for a guide, the way to find the guide is: from out the crowd to say simply, but loud enough to carry, "What fine building is that one there with the aluminum painted cupola?"

The man who told us was well informed. In turn he showed us the house of the patriot who had shot Huey Long, Huey Long's house, and the State University which General Sherman had founded. That bit of information took me by surprise, as if somebody had told me the devil painted the altar piece in the Antwerp cathedral.

The man took us downstairs, and because I was interested in Art, didn't mind showing us where certain holes had been puttied in the marble floor and walls, but we were admonished not to look too hard, as he didn't want a big crowd following us. We saw the putty, and the man showed us where this one had stood, and where that one had stood, and there was the door

through which Huey had come surrounded by his bodyguard, and here was the corner from which our informant had witnessed the fracas.

It wasn't a very big corner—ninety degrees I would say, with room for one eyewitness only. But what with one thing and another, and human longing to be identified with heroics being what it is, it struck me that an interesting composite photograph might be made of all the eyewitnesses who, as time goes, looked from behind that corner.

In New Orleans I had been told of an all-Louisiana exhibition of paintings on view in the State University in Baton Rouge. The colleges were closed for summer recess when I called, but I managed to find the teacher of sculpture, Mr. Duncan Ferguson, whose work I knew from New York, and who proceeded to show me about. In a hundred years the universities of the country will lie like island universes scattered over the continent, in nests of wood, when trees and vines now planted have had a chance to grow. Like islands of peace and knowledge, or like the monasteries, where seeds of culture were saved during the turbulences of the dark ages, and where the traveller can drop in for a talk and an exchange of ideas—for I doubt if ever a talk over a glass will be outdone by mechanical entertainments. The traveller can drop in today, but in the more recently built ones like Duke and the State University here, he misses something which trees and vines alone do give.

I was made acquainted with a thing I hadn't come upon before and which, I thought, showed to advantage for this school. With mural painting on the upward swing in the country, the art students of L.S.U. are being taught fresco painting, and instead of seeing canvases stacked, I saw squares of plaster on

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which pupils had been at work under the teacher Conrad Albrizio. Each graduate had been commissioned to do a mural on the campus, and I was shown what so far had been done.

The All-Louisiana show wasn't large. There were two canvases by Albrizio: Negroes with mules working in red earth—a little lower in key than I had seen it. Also four canvases by the art teacher of Newcomb College, which stirred in me the thoughts I had had when seeing her witty, capable work in New Orleans. Also several thin Picassos over various signatures, and a couple of Dufys over others.

Mr. Ferguson took me about the campus and showed me doors and reliefs he had been commissioned to do. Louisiana symbols, easy to look at, and evidence of the university's sympathy towards modern trends. Mr. Ferguson's words about art appreciation found in the South, and his expressions of belief in the growth of art down here, were convincing and good to listen to.

We drove the ninety-seven miles to Natchez via route 61, to do which we had to dip into Mississippi again, and at Woodville we had to make a detour. Even if you don't want to go to Natchez, I recommend you take that detour, which I shall try to describe, although I used all my adjectives for lushness in Louisiana.

It was a brand new road with no billboards or other advertising on it as yet, hence impressing you as something youthful, as something still believing in *le beau et le vrai*. When we were here, it hadn't been black-topped, and was therefore rather dusty. This, however, didn't matter, if you didn't pass other cars. On its forty-one miles we passed but two. It had been dug through red hills. The cuts were vertical and bright as blood, and



*Queer Fish*  
[Lithograph]

MABEL DWIGHT



*The Nesters*  
[Oil]

TOM LEA

all along it stood big trees whose crowns interwove above your head with the sunlight filtering down through festoons of Spanish moss. It had been well ditched and scientifically banked at every turn, and a turn occurred almost every three hundred feet.

It was like driving through a red and green maze, through a tortuous tunnel leading to some promised land, and in trying to metaphor away your inquietude you compared it to a whorl in a creator's brain and tried hopefully to see yourself as a thought going through it. "Brocca's convolution!" you thought, "connecting ideas with articulation! Through such a whorl in an artist's head has flown the idea to *Spring Song* and a Landscape you know of," you thought.

Suddenly it landed us on the cement outside Natchez.

At first glance Natchez was but another town, and we went into a TOURIST without thinking about it one way or another. But barely had we signed up, when the landlady proceeded to make us acquainted with the Natchez Garden Club and tell us about the yearly Pilgrimages to ancient (ante-bellum) shrines. We learned where to go, and immediately set out to explore the old mansions of the Mississippi cotton kings, which Mr. Daniels in Raleigh had told me about.

Coming back from the expedition I saw the tourist home in a new light, and realized this too was an ante-bellum house built on the same pattern but not to the same scale as those I had just visited. Mid-Victorian pomp making itself evident as the growth it was—almost tropical in its urge to manifest itself—finding space where only tropical life and Victorian decorators would have guessed: banisters, doorframes, hat racks, bootjacks, knickknacks. The era of the "slavey," the maid-of-all-work, of this stratum. It can all be considered now in condescending adjectives. It has ceased to matter.



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Coming into the parlor I expected the landlady to ask me to give an account of my impressions. Instead of that—believe it or not—(having deciphered my signature in her guest book, I suppose, accounts for it) she said: "My son has a book you have written. I have read it."

I couldn't say, "Which one?" without implying a falsehood, so I merely bowed.

"I think it was very good," she said.

"Thank you," I said and wondered: "What more?"—for I can stand a lot of that kind of a thing. But no more was forthcoming, and I couldn't very well start pumping her, for that guardian angel of mine walking behind me has an intolerably large sense of humor. I bowed again and went to my room to write notes for a book which in due time, I hope, will find its way to her parlor table.

Having seen what is left of the cotton kingdom, the averagely informed tourist concludes that an exquisite nineteenth century culture founded on slavery might draw nourishment from this soil and bloom luxuriantly until a northerly wind of nineteenth century realism and liberalism wilts it. An obvious conclusion. And extending his thought into his own century he draws another, equally obvious: no culture founded on suppression, monopoly, and persecution will last either. And if a war doesn't finish it, will the poison inherent in its system bring an end to it? he wonders.

The way the Victorians built has ceased to matter, except where such of us as can't help it are obliged to live in the shells they left. Their particular Babelonian effort to reach heaven through pomp can be treated with condescension by us.

It was not with condescension, however, but with something more akin to fellow-feeling for human dreams and ambition

come to naught, that I entered these places one after another. Ghosts showed me about: a white lady, speaking as from afar, as from the distance there naturally would have been, had other things been equal. As I have said before, they never are. Instead of having my card sent in by a silver-buttoned Negro, the lady herself opened the door to me when I rang the bell, and she herself received the half dollar it cost to go through her home.

Or a less prepossessing ghost emerging from a basement: Irish by look, Scotch by fragrance, and claiming descent from the original owner—offering to tell the tale of woe and frustration for the usual consideration.

Lack of means, and modern necessities adapting themselves to past grandeur: twentieth century plumbing taking the line of least resistance across the facades of houses, instead of boring through oak timbers and solid brick to keep out of sight as entrails should.

Inside: heavy mahogany doors hung on silver. Huge mirrors imported from France. Chandeliers of bronze also imported, and made to order with American Indians symbolizing the graces. Nothing too good or too costly, for the planters cannot use the money they are making since the gin has been invented, and England has taken to supplying the world with manufactured cotton goods. Most of the furniture has been scattered, but here and there an exquisite piece bears witness to a loveliness that was. My gentle, soft-voiced guide made an indispensable part of the ensemble, which was quiet and sad, yet perfect in its way. No half dollar could eliminate the feeling of trespassing it gave me to be here. As on another occasion, I stated my errand, and gave my reason for asking to be shown this fifth act of *Peer Gynt*.

Going from one to another, these big mansions in their dilapidated glory impressed me as another Wailing Wall, and the

yearly "Pilgrimages" of the descendants as some Jewish feast of sorrow. The money taken in through advertising the pilgrimages doesn't seem sufficient to maintain museum patina on upholstery and hangings. Year by year they become a little less showy, a little more threadbare—and you wonder what in the South it is that wants to identify itself with these ghosts.

The spaciousness of the interiors and the park-like grounds were lovely to behold. It seems as though moss-hung live oaks take care of the lawns below them—no undergrowth anywhere. I was, however, interested to see what the planters had put on their walls besides mirrors, and started looking around for paintings.

Jonathan Daniels writes: "*Peddlers came selling easily paintings which Power (Tyrone Power, Irish actor of that day) said were 'worse pictures than are offered to connoisseurs at a pawnbroker's sale in London.' Some of the pictures remain.*"

On inquiring where any might be found I was told of a house that held a picture collection, and went to see it. Nobody was at home, but a Negro servant girl had been permitted to take visitors through the house at the usual charge. It was fun being thus conducted through the big hall, which also had been used for a ballroom. Striding rapidly down it, the maid, first with one arm then with the other indicated the pictures: "There's one. There's one. There's one. There's one" to the end, and, on making a sharp turn into the music room, made an elbow gesture at a little, nude, much-decorated Roman bronze god on a black pedestal: "That was dug up in Pompeii."

"No it wasn't!" I said. "It was made in France last century!"

The "humph!" in her eye was audible as she took up her interrupted guiding—while from the mirrors dead years looked out at us in blotches.

The paintings—what I could see of them—were landscapes. They all needed cleaning, restretching, repairing, and new frames, but considering other pictures I know of in need of the same, I wouldn't waste it on these. A list of names of the artists reads like a Brooklyn prohibition line-up: Albani, Maratti, Bassi, Fidanza, etc. Curled up on a table lay some recently made gouaches, fresh in color and with emphasis on representation—aside from the Negro girl, the most alive thing in the house.

Before it got dark I had a chance to see the famous unfinished Coney Island-Byzantine edifice, ominously named like Napoleon's abode on St. Helena: The Longwood.

The Longwood is, in a way, the most impressive of all the mansions with its interior space for thirty-two rooms. It has been told, and it will be told again, how the house painters left their brushes in the paint pots—where you can see them to this day—and took up guns to defend the Confederacy. Nothing was spared to make this place into something the planters hadn't yet seen. But only a roof and leader pipes of solid tin, only an extremely well-built foundation and shell, Victorian in architecture and Philadelphian by architect, with bricks handmade on the premises by the slaves, bear witness to a pomp that might have been.

The ground floor of this place was made tenable for the owner when the war broke out. I was shown four family portraits down here. By the light of my torch they looked good enough to hang in a better place. Also was I shown a couple of landscapes, one of which had been painted over a portrait of a girl that by now was showing through the landscape. My guide had been mystified by this, and admitted he didn't understand the symbolism: "Look," he said; "there sits a fisherman by the bank, and there in the sky lies a perfect face near the moon and

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that cloud. I don't know what it means. The fisherman is dreaming or something—or thinking of this dead girl.” My guide was wary in expressing his surmizes—and why wouldn't he be? A lot of hardboiled students of art and human nature come here, and would be only too happy to have him deliver himself of a little copy for a book on painting in the United States.

Drawing a line across a state at 50 m.p.h. does not, perhaps, lend itself to a study of the state's paintability, but what I had seen on my trip so far I judged to be eminently paintable. What seemed to be lacking was not so much artists as art patrons demanding the kind of thing which would stimulate a national expression. Were there a demand for the American theme, there would be plenty to supply it.

Having crossed the Mississippi on an old ferry boat, we drove up along the Red River through Louisiana, and as we sped onward over good cement, symbols of different ways of making a living began to come over the horizon from the northwest: men on horseback tending cattle, roadstands selling plaster of Paris statues of Hereford-colored longhorns, and here and there an oil derrick. We had also made the acquaintance of a very light and feathery willow growing in these juicy lands in great abundance. Otherwise it was mainly oak and pine which deteriorated into stunted scrubs where woods had been cut down, and a second or third growth was coming up. The landscape began to change. Texas began to make itself felt, but we didn't yet know it was Texas. We knew surpassingly little about Texas then. We know more now—although we always knew the Dust Bowl isn't the place where the Texans play the boys from the Rose, Cotton, and Sugar Bowls.



FOR THE first time in my life I stood confronted with an oil field—and a distressing sight it was.

It is written: "*Man will relinquish one good only for a greater good.*" I thought—what horrible thing, then, has he relinquished here to attain to *this* improvement in his standard of living? But I dropped the pose. I understood, of course, perfectly well, that in destroying his landscape by digging down through it for oil, he had hoped to replace the beauty of his pastures and corn-fields with something more urban he had seen advertised. Furthermore, he'd have had visions of selling out and going away. As for those who were to take the land over after him and endure making a living among these sights and stenches, he, presumably, had no thought—or, if he had, he'd be humming the Texas refrain: ". . . *it's all your misfortune and none of my own*"—for this was Texas, route 80, between Marshall and Mineola.

I do not know if his dream about going away came true. From what I heard and saw, the people who have found oil on their homesteads seem to stand by their solitary gusher to not much advantage, but to a great deterioration of the immediate

landscape. Not even in Belgium in 1917 had I seen the earth crust more insulted and injured.

Until I point out an Absolute in which opposites resolve into unity, it might sound hazardous when I say that this bit of earth here, even in its present state, was not and could not be without beauty. What prevented me from identifying myself with the purpose here and thus from seeing any of beauty's manifestations, was the lack of coördination and economy in the carrying out of that purpose.

We were driving slowly through it. "Stop the car," I said, "it is too bad to miss." I wondered if anybody had ever painted any of this. Somehow, it reminded me of lithography. There was no color.

The road I stood on was stained with black crude oil, but it was cleaner than the rest of the earth. Wheels rolling over it kept it so. Immediately in front of me was a small house and a small garden made smaller yet by the huge oil derrick and the big, laboring pump in the midst of it. "Of recent installation," I concluded, for from out of the oil covering the garden stuck three stalks of corn not yet killed. None of the machinery I saw looked clean, or new, or even efficient. It impressed me as second- or third-hand stuff, sold to farmers or small-town people who found oil in their backyards. The earth as far as the eye could see had been attacked; the oil had laid a pall on everything, and the only life was that of men and the mechanical one of motors. The stench was terrific.

I turned my head automatically in response to a steam whistle, and saw a black oil train approaching on the embankment running parallel to the road. White steam was issuing out of the locomotive, a black telegraph pole up there was leaning at a crazy angle, and for a second I thought the locomotive leaned. It

was an association of ideas: the train on the embankment, and a lithograph I have in my collection, a picture by Thomas Benton.

When I had bought this Ford and had polished it, I saw the surrounding Bearsville landscape reflected in the trunk cover, and noticed that its curvature plus certain flaws made the things reflected—including myself—look tortuous, as if we were made of rubber, and a truck had run over us in odd places.

Here on route 80 I wanted to see reflected in the back of my car these oil pumps, and drills, and the train on the embankment, to make sure that a suspicion I had wasn't founded on a wish. It wasn't! Myself, the derricks, the train, all reflected in the trunk cover: *Portrait of the Author on Oil Field Background*, by Thomas H. Benton—whose tortuous idiom I long ago had accepted, although I had often wished he would modify the primaries on his palette.

We drove into Mineola on a street broad enough to take care of the traffic of Megalopolis. The houses on it were one-story houses with flat roofs. Standing in the middle of a crossing and looking around, subconsciously expecting to see a streetful of houses with the sky as a blue ribbon between the roofs, but seeing the horizon as outlined by the housetops, gave one the impression of town individuality, which could be labelled, "vastness of sky."

From the conversation in restaurants (Diners) where we had taken our meals we could have learned, had we not already known, the main interest of the state where we happened to be. We would be eating the same brands of canned goods and listening to the same broadcasts from the same stations while eating these goods, but the words bantered across and along the counter had been *peaches* in Georgia, *citrus* in Florida, *cotton* in Louisiana, and here it was *oil*. An elderly diner with a drooping mous-



tache and cowboy boots was telling the short-order cook that a piece of land he persistently had refused to buy for years had come out with a gusher overnight—and would somebody please kick his pants. Eating my pork and beans I considered how far back in man's history went his desire to identify himself with good luck, even to the extent of telling a lie about having missed it.

The country between Mineola and Dallas is flat and dotted with trees—or else it is flat and dotted with a brand of cattle of which I as yet didn't know the name, and so far could associate with nothing but a white-faced bull in a cattle picture by the Hollander Paulus Potter, and a calendar picture I had seen in the Woodstock meat market. When paintings from the Texas Federal Art Project go circulating, the eastern part of the States might become better acquainted with this important item of the country's housekeeping, and perhaps realize that seeing a herd of Hereford cattle on the Texas plains can do as much for the soul as the piece of tenderloin sustaining it.

While I could relate the landscape to Ruisdael and his cattle-painting countrymen, I could connect up with no earlier experience the impression of vastness I got from the moving Texas circle.

The "moving circle" is a concept that was forced upon me during my early sea days. I then became conscious of standing in the center of an immense circle while above me vaulted an immense dome. The circle didn't turn; it moved in a direction opposite to the one my ship pointed: I stood still, while the good earth rolled towards me, pouring seas, and countries, and cities, and rivers over my horizon. The dome above me stood still, though, alternately black with stars, and blue with clouds, and with gold and color splashed on it for a little while mornings and

evenings. I thought of the dome as being rigid with clouds and stars and moon travelling upon it according to wills as free and capricious as my own. It was not until I started studying navigation and began to think, that I realized how eminently correct I had been in my assumption.

Except for the trunk lid, which I had wiped off earlier, our blue car was gray when we drove into Dallas. Its form, to be sure, revealed it as a car, otherwise the garage might have thought it was a piece of Texas we came riding on. Underneath Texas were layers of Louisiana and the other Gulf states, and some of Florida. For a round piece of Mexico it was all sent towards the Gulf on a stream of what surely must be considered Texas at its purest, and Illinois emerged again blue and shiny with a bit of black and yellow New York fore and aft advertising a world fair and revealing what the police think is my identity.

In a clean car and white clothes we then rolled up to our Dallas destination where our hostess, Mrs. Robert Giles, received us with genuine twentieth century hospitality, offering us the freedom of the bathrooms: hot and cold showers, towels, et al. But a more ancient need had to be stilled first, and we had sandwiches and beer.

This was an ample house, and a large family, and a comfortable place to stay. "American" I'd call it, not to identify it, but because I'd like to give a possible European reader an idea of what that word means when used as an adjective to modify the noun "home." The European will have to read what I wish to tell him between my lines, however.

Knowing the object of my travel, my hostess took me to the grounds of the Dallas exposition, which, although over long ago, still had the buildings standing. They looked Egyptian, as well they might, Dallas being but some fifty miles to the north of the

river Nile. They also looked like modern advertisements—a statement neither for nor against them, but merely a way of placing them—and I, as ever having to take an architect's word for it, can conceive of nothing better in the line of buildings, although I can easily imagine getting a much greater thrill from modern architecture than any I so far have got.

The skyscraper construction, which seems so flimsy on the background of Karnak and Xochicalco, has made me marvel at its height and daring—but how can we hope to transmit a double somersault to the archaeologists of the next civilization, particularly with aerial bombing being what it is? Perhaps it is too depressing always to be seeing our doings with the eyes of those archaeologists. We might better see our day in the light of the eighth century A.D. and imagine what Charlemagne would have said to a Sears Roebuck catalogue.

We entered the Texas building on the fair grounds. This structure is permanent and contains among other things two murals painted by Mr. Eugene Savage, and reputed to be the largest murals in the country. After having been given ample time by my guides in which to look, I was asked what I thought of them, and my answer was: "O.K."

What could I answer? What could anybody answer? What can one say when he is being asked what he thinks of a lady's hat? He knows the hat has been bought and paid for and worn, so it can't be changed, and his answer must be: "O.K." Otherwise he could say: "It looks like heck!—change it!"

Texas has put her best foot foremost for this exposition. At least the foot officially acknowledged as the best. An out-of-town muralist has been imported to do these enormous paintings, and they show—I was told—an abstract of Texas history under six flags. I was later told, on the very best authority, that there were

never more than five flags, and that six are a romantic dream.

I have heard it argued that Mr. Savage has no deep feeling for Texas in particular, nor any understanding of its history, but I think this can be considered beside the point. The love for a country and pride in its achievements can be poured into a decorator by merely telling him about it, and in very much the same way a pastry baker pours sugar dressing into the little bag he squeezes when he writes "Happy Birthday!" on a layer cake.

The painter here knew his technique and is a good draftsman. His symbols are very broad and flattering to Texas. You might say these murals are advertisements for Texas.

Without quarreling with the above decorations, I would like to mention two other (smaller) murals in the same building. In making up my mind about regionalism and states' rights in art, they mean a great deal to me. I recognized them for the work of Tom Lea, the Texan who painted the small mural *The Nesters* in the Washington, D.C., post office. The same starkness of statement. The same reining in of color. The same able draftsmanship. And in myself I recognized the feeling of being convinced of this painter's integrity. His knowledge of his subject. His pride in it. His love for it, and his urge to convey it to the rest of the country in his own manner. For a second I speculated idly on what the big murals in the other room might have looked like had Tom Lea—not been permitted to do them—but asked to do them—ordered to do them.

From the fair grounds we went to the Texas Museum of Fine Arts, where I met the curator Mr. Everett Spruce. Himself a painter, he belongs to a group, which, in justice to their work, I can give no better name than Texas Painters. Mr. Spruce took me down into the basement of the museum to show me canvases by some of these. It proved to be the usual two-inches-to-the-foot

sketches done in oil, which artists have to submit to the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department in order to join the competition for a job—in this case, decorating the new post office of San Antonio, Texas.

He lined them up against the wall and I spent some time in front of them. Although extremely individual, they all in some subtle way related themselves to the two smaller murals in the fair building, which fact proceeded to bring order into that part of my world labeled: "American Painting." Mr. Spruce told me that an exhibition had been held in the museum of all the rejected Texas sketches for this competition, and when I asked if Dallas hadn't become incensed at having these paintings so rejected, his expression showed me I had been naïve.

Of course, they couldn't all be accepted. Only one man could have the job, and Howard Cook had been awarded it. There was no quarrel in Dallas, I understood, with the Treasury's choice. Albeit not from their state, the Texans admitted a good man had been chosen for the San Antonio job—while all the painters whose work I saw here had been given smaller post offices round about the state. These men were native to Texas, and each had given richly of his experience, his time, and his ability for this occasion. Alexandre Hogue, in considering the structure of the San Antonio post office, had thought that loading the column-supported spaces aloft with crowds of people, herds of cattle, or anything else weighty, would give the spectator an uncomfortable sense of having above him something which rightfully belonged on the level of his eye. He had suggested as much in his sketch by painting sky and clouds, and to relate it to the postal service, put in meteorologists with their instruments making weather observations to the safer flying of the mails. As this sug-

gestion had to strike the judges by implication, it apparently hadn't struck.

Thomas Stell, Jr. had coördinated rural Texas scenes in his sketch. Looking at it I recalled Forbes Watson's words about an artist getting a wider audience for his work as a mural than as an easel painter. Not being sure what is the purpose of art, I thought for a moment with some indifference of this wider audience, and with some feeling of the man who will walk a long way to find a picture he will want to add to his collection, and when he has bought it will sit down and enjoy it. I couldn't feel very apologetic for thinking of him, for eventually, and as a rule, he gives his pictures to a public institution where those who don't run may read. There are painters painting for that latter-day forgotten man, and Stell here, I took to be one of them.

Then, to shake my theories about regional painting I was shown a sketch by a Chicago artist, John Walley, representing a herd of Texas cattle stampeding for a water hole, a sketch which put the onlooker in perfect rapport with the state, and a bit of excellent painting besides. Mr. Walley had to pay for the return of his sketch, I believe, and that might be the reason it was still here. Although I don't like to put my finger in other people's pie, I said I hoped the curator would try to secure this picture for the museum. I stuck my whole hand in, and said he ought to secure all of them for the museum. Now was the time to buy. Even Wall Street would tell him that: buy low—sell high.

The weather in Dallas was hot, and my hostess urged me to go to the swimming pool in the country club and have a dip before dinner. As Peter felt the heat as much as I did, he too went, while one of the little girls came along to introduce us. We had

the pool to ourselves, and having dipped I sat on the edge and watched the other two jump about and swim. The little girl in her blue bathing suit and cap swan-dived again and again from the high spring board. The clearness of the water made me see her graceful motions as a dance in space where gravity approaches nil, or as a naiad, or as something strongly pointing along the grain of our universal system. Her symmetry and grace when with arms outstretched she catapulted herself into the air made me consider a definition of beauty, and wonder at the utter impossibility of a world order where such a sight would not go *with* the grain.

I looked at the other youngster, older by five years and "grown up" as those clucks imagine it. How great the difference between boy and girl. He too, lovely in his youth. The loveliness of a colt, and the awkwardness of it. She splashed water in his face. She had to do it twice before he realized it was meant for him. Then smiling superiorly he promptly grabbed her leg and ducked her head in a way I objected to as brutal. But she seemed to like it, and enticed him to do it again.

I folded up, and through my head ran the lines:

*"And who are these that dive for copper coins?  
No longer we, my Love, no longer we."*

But I knew that also this was a pose, for had she been here, I should have grabbed her leg and ducked her head, and although she would have screamed and kicked, we should have enjoyed it, and played *with* the grain, which direction is Beauty.

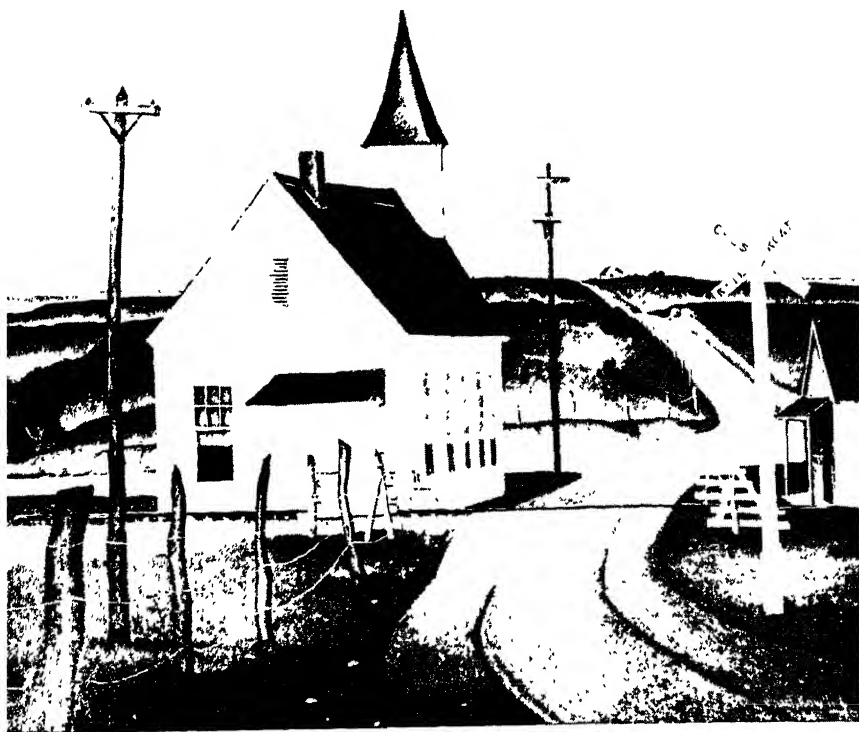
The Texas men grow tall and slim, which, for fun, we may consider Texas' way of naturally selecting from the conquering species the type that will stand out to best advantage on the flat Texas landscape. There is something satisfying in seeing these .



*In the Big Bend*  
[Oil]

JERRY BYWATERS





*Railroad Crossing*  
[Oil]

CHARLES BOWLING

gaunt, handsome rakes, old and young, against the background of endless fields and prairies. The Texas painters have thrown that hint my way, and made me see my genial host in just that manner: tall, thin, white-haired, blue-eyed, keen, resembling the national bird, yet with a sense of play and humor. This latter might be what prompted him to call up the papers and tell them that at his house was staying a New York writer on his way through the country to gather material for a book on American art.

As a consequence of his telephoning I was called downstairs next morning to be photographed and interviewed for the *Dallas News*. Very pleasantly we went through the routine. I hadn't been prepared for it, so all I could find to say was that I thought they were fools down here for importing painters from New York with so many good ones of their own.

The term "mare's nest" is one I often wish I had invented. With no foundation in reality whatever, it conjures up imagery stinkingly Augean, full of wasps, and with a brown horse nightmarishly sitting on eggs in the center. It is a forceful expression no other language can duplicate.

The mare's nest I stirred up with my little remark didn't stink very much, only a few wasps hovered about, and the horse wasn't as lively as some I have seen. When the paper came out the next day, the youngster brought it to me, folded so it showed my picture: "Are you going to send *this* to her?"

I looked and silently acknowledged his italics, but I couldn't admit defeat: "Certainly! Why not?"

"You look like one of those fellows we saw working on the road in Georgia."

I laughed: "They had on striped suits. That there is a Palm Beach suit."

"Your socks are striped."

I said no more. He had seen it, as I had seen it. My head photographed bald as a bullet. The harsh effect of the flash bulb, revealing everything I try to hide, made me look like my own Id. The one striped sock prominently displayed in the foreground was the best argument I had ever encountered for abstractionism in painting: those stripes along with the bullet head made the picture into *Fugitive From a Georgia Chain Gang*.

In the afternoon the painter Jerry Bywaters called on me. He was on the board of an artist association, and one of those whose work I had seen in the museum's basement. He wanted to thank me for what I had said to the paper, and brought me a copy of the *Southwest Review* in which he had an article on painting in Texas. He agreed to take me about to studios that I might see some more paintings, although, it appeared, most of the painters were using the summer for exploring the state. Some had gone to Taos, N.M., and some had gone to the Big Bend in southern Texas where the sky is forever blue, and the clouds always small, white, flat-bottomed ones with one end pointed and the other swollen. Mr. Bywaters was showing me photographs of paintings where such clouds figured. Artists had been accused of mannerism and formula-painting owing to these clouds, but had then found a pencil drawing in the West Texas Historical Museum, made by an early settler, in which those same clouds were present. This drawing had convinced the critics of the painters' integrity, as the assumption was that an early settler could be nothing but an honest realist. But wouldn't you think critics now and then would go out and look at the subjects they criticize in painters' canvases?

I enjoyed my caller, who was standing up for Texas painters' rights, as they see those rights in relation to the government's art

projects. He also told me that Texas was not beyond the day where Europeans with Royal Academy letters after their names could come to Texas cities and paint slick portraits of the innocents and their wives. Such a one would entrench himself in a big hotel, paint the owner's wife against the bill, announce his presence through an interview in the papers, let a matron give a tea for him, and land four or five five-thousand dollar commissions, each done in a couple of days, and then move on to the next city. On a couple of occasions Bywaters and his friends had gone to the hotel and advised the academician to leave town. They do those things well in Texas.

In the evening I attended a dinner where I was cornered by two architects who had been instrumental in importing the out-of-state man to do the huge decorations in the Texas building. They asked me what I had meant by what I had said to the papers.

I have often speculated on what would be a good answer to the "what-do-you-mean-by-that?" question to a perfectly obvious statement.

Making a curve around the offensive word I had used, I proceeded to congratulate them as Texans on the many good artists they had in their state, and then I expressed my wonder at architects not making use of them to decorate their buildings and create something indigenous to Texas.

The public take notice: your architects hadn't known these men existed!

Whatever else anybody can find to say against the present Administration I cannot, for lack of knowledge, dispute. This I know: the various art projects have enabled the country's painters to exhibit their work in a manner never before known, and surely without drawing too heavily on the country's resources

for this important cultural purpose. The display of murals in public buildings has furthermore taught the thinking public that there are other painters available than those the architects feel bound to have decorate their buildings.

The two architects were friendly and tried to make me see it from their angle, which, indeed, wasn't difficult, albeit not pleasant either: "We can't take a chance with unknown people. Here we put up an important building. We have to have an important and established name for a signature on the decorations. The public judges the work by the name. If it's a big name, they like the picture."

I couldn't make them see it from my angle: take a chance with something you personally like—with unknown people who have faith in themselves—with the country's younger men. But no, they would have none of it.

You might have heard it discussed as I often have: are architects artists? My guess is: sometimes, but they do have to consider a great many things which make them timid about taking chances. They suppress the artist in themselves to become dependable and sought-for architects, and as a consequence, the Id of an architect has long hair and a flowing tie.

I became good friends with one of these architects and I hope I shall see him again. He took me to lunch, which is a thing I always appreciate, and then he took me through a couple of skyscrapers he had built, which too was O.K., although I doubt whether I had the qualifications for fully appreciating them. While he attended to an appointment in his office, I had the freedom of his library, from a shelf of which I took down an elaborate, and for its time and subject erudite tome with faded gold decorations on its back. It was a work printed in England during the latter half of last century and contained replicas in color of

the decorative motifs of all the civilizations arranged according to time, and proving by this arrangement—in a transported Darwinian sort of way—that the efforts of the aeons had gone to evolve the Victorian gentleman who had compiled this book, and his sense of beauty.

The decorations of Ancient Mexico, Amerindia, Australasia, and dark Africa were shown under one head, "Savages," and not given much space. The Orient was given more. Turkey, the sick man of Europe of that day, was given some, and Mecca plush being in fashion, Arabia was mentioned. Although this was a hymn book to the elaborate, Greece was given quite a few pages, and Greece, also here, proved her easy superiority: in form simplicity, in color black, white, and terra cotta. Much space had been given the Renaissance, particularly its more elaborate manifestations, and the whole cavalcade led up to the day of the compiler who apotheosized the decorations of his time on his title page.

What caused man to lose that faith in his destiny which these super-charged decorations express? Was it the social philosophers I heard speaking from soap boxes in my childhood? Or were these but prophets of changes inherent in our social constitution?

Some hundred and fifty miles from Dallas lies Ferndale Lake secluded among hills. It is a club lake with its own boats and guides, and here my friends took me fishing. I enjoy fishing. It satisfies something primeval in me. I have lain on ships' jib booms many times with a hook and line or a fish spear, waiting for dolphin and bonita. It is a fight catching them. They almost knock you off the boom and overboard. I have also partaken of the more gentle sport of catching sharks from the poop, but it is

on the whole more fun feeding them and seeing them swim and turn over in their element. I suppose catching fish satisfies a craving in all men.

At Ferndale Lake I was placed on a red leather air cushion in a seat with a springy back to it, in the bow of a kind of canoe, while the guide tended the out-board motor and steered me to the fishing grounds. Skimming over the surface with nothing but the calm lake in front of me, and unable to feel my body because there was nothing the matter with it, I found it easy to think of myself as a thought idling over the lake. I could have kept this up all day, but I had been taken here to fish.

We stopped, and the guide handed me a rod and line with float and baited hook. All I had to do was to sit on the air cushion and hold the rod. In a while the float was pulled under. *There*, undeniably, is a thrill. That is, my Id got a thrill. My Ego realized politely that this was the fun I had come here to get. I lifted the little fish out of the water, and almost automatically it swung aft to the guide who unhooked it, strung it on a line, baited my hook again, flung it forward, and said: "All right."

In fairly rapid succession I caught seven. The guide said: "You are having luck to-day."

My Id by this time had had enough, and was now being prevented by my Ego from turning around on the air cushion and saying to the guide: "What the hell do you call this—fishing?"

I caught my hook in a stump and sat looking at the banks until it was time to go home. The others of the party had also caught several of these little fish. The guides took them ashore in pails, cleaned them, wrapped them in newspaper, and put them into the luggage compartment of the car. And when we got home the cook took them out and put them in the refrigerator and fried them for lunch the next day—but by that time I was

halfway to Austin, where I was going to interview Dr. Frank Dobie at the Texas State University. Never had I smelled fish less, or smelled less of fish than after that fishing trip.

I was alone in the car and going southward along route 77. It was a pouring rain through which I could barely see the flat earth that lay all around me. As I came further south the rain stopped, and the landscape, becoming void of trees, showed here and there a farm and its windmill to break a monotony that stretched on towards the horizon. Cotton, corn, sugar cane, sorghum, or else grass, but no cattle. Not paintable as a landscape for one who is used to trees, but a good background for tall Texans, men and women. The cotton stood in rows over large fields. Between the rows were shallow ditches full of rainwater reflecting the gray sky. When the sky turned blue, they too turned blue: blue ribbons stretched over the black earth between green rows of bushes. I had to smile. It was as if a child had put one over on me.

From out a cornfield came two men carrying guns. They had been hunting and had had luck. *Figures in Landscape* on the fringes of my consciousness as I shot by, had it not been for their quarry walking between them with his hands tied. Long ago I made up my mind that crime was something for which the construction of society was responsible, and when I heard Kropotkin had said it long before I was born, I felt I could make it an article of faith. But as I have no remedy to offer for the ill, I should not be sent to Siberia.

In the *Southwest Review* I had read a story from the Louisiana bayous: "Alligator Bait" by George D. Stephens, in which, among children's chatter the reader was taken down canals in the cypress swamps. Alligators lived here, and among the cypresses grew the white magnolia. The scenery was described in a way



that made me believe I had been there. I had got no sensation comparable to it from any Louisiana landscape painting I had seen—except, vaguely, maybe, from one of the Hutson primitives. The mad little Negro boy of the tale might have seen the swamp fantastically as it was depicted in Hutson's painting. Four white boys idly and idiotically murdered the little Negro as he was picking magnolias in the swamps.

The story had made me feel responsible; and as I shot by the sheriff and his prisoner coming out of the corn field, I felt again I was the guilty one.

Arriving at the University of Texas I asked for Dr. Dobie, Professor of English, and author of *Coronado's Children*, etc. He had gone to California the day before. Summer, apparently, isn't the time to look people up in their homes. Lyle Saxon, whose name I heard from New Orleans to Taos, was another civilizing ingredient I missed. But I had a third string to my bow: Dr. Fannie Ratchford of the Wren Library of the U. of T., author of *Legends of Angria* and *Emily Brontë*—and her I found at her desk in the library.

From what I heard and saw in Austin, I learned there are two schools of thought for putting Texas on the map through symbols. One advocates the ten-gallon hat, spurs, and lariat, and the Texas state flower, the bluebonnet, which in the spring makes the earth resemble the sky—all of which the other school finds hackneyed, without, however, having come to any definite conclusions about new symbols. But it is looking for them. Alexandre Hogue, when I spoke to him about it, suggested ironically that the plow and the barb-wire fence be used, for those it were that caused the erosion under which Texas suffers. In the hands of out-of-state suitcase farmers they turned grazing lands into wheat fields, when, for a little while in history, wheat was

selling at a couple of dollars a bushel. When wheat went down and the suitcase farmers departed, the wind blew the top soil away.

As I, an outsider, see it on my retrospective trip, I see the Texas painters finding their way to new symbols, and I leave their state convinced that impressionism, as a means for rendering Texas—or any other country—belongs to a day when some of the people could sit back and enjoy what they had, while others, who had nothing, could go west and open up new lands. And in this might be found the explanation why impressionism dies so hard: timid people cling to an “All’s well with the world” school of painting. In their unwillingness to believe there are no more frontiers, they refuse to accept symbols to a different effect. Not so long ago I stood in the Metropolitan Museum in front of the painting *Paul and Virginia*. In my hand was a reproduction of Carl Hofer’s *The Wind* which had just taken first prize at the Carnegie International—and in my heart was distress to see what those intervening years had done to a pair of Academic lovers. I saw them less as pictures than as states of mind of their times. Imagine one. Then imagine the other. Still, in retrospect, isn’t it more hopeful to live constructively among the ruins, than gaily in a doomed society?

Dr. Ratchford was telling me about art history in Texas, but as she wasn’t free to illustrate her talk until five P.M. she detailed one of her assistants to show me about. From the tower of the library I was shown the Texas Colorado River in flood. Traffic had been suspended over the two bridges, and tree crowns were sticking out of the water in odd places. An odd sight, and a difficult one to accommodate for a mind that had no previous experience with inundations. The river flowed irresistibly and gently, but obviously, there was too much of it. Tree crowns sticking out

of the water? The natural thing was to say that somebody around here was a liar.

Far out to the north and east and south, Texas exposed itself unendingly, while towards the west the foothills of what eventually become the Rockies made Catskill contours on the sky. The university buildings seen from the tower were simple in design and inclining towards Mediterranean influences. Somehow, they weren't jarred by a red brick mansion of mansard roof and wrought iron decorations, the one-time residence of Major George W. Littlefield.

The story of Major Littlefield obliged me to revise my impression of the reconstruction period of the South. From nothing I had read in Claude Bowers' *The Tragic Era* or anywhere else, had I come to believe it possible for a reb officer, one of the famous Terry Rangers of Hood's Brigade, returning home after the surrender, shot to pieces and penniless, to make a fortune in cattle and Texas land. But Major Littlefield did! When he died in 1921 his estate was worth between eight and thirteen million dollars. His gifts to the U. of T. including the Wren Library, amount to about three million dollars, and he willed his home as a residence for the president of the university. More patina is needed before it can be so used. At present it is being utilized for offices. Just now it looks like a museum item, probably because of its isolation from its time and kind, and owing to the birdseye view one gets of it from the tower.

The studio of Elizabeth Ney impressed me the same way. Elizabeth Ney was a sculptor and a protégé of the King of Bavaria who also protected Wagner. In her studio was a statue of the former and a bust of the latter, and busts of Humboldt, Schopenhauer, and other great Germans. Miss Ney was a daugh-

ter of Napoleon's Marshal Ney. She came to Texas in 1872 and worked here until her death in 1907. She has two statues in the Austin capitol, Stephen F. Austin and Sam Houston, and somebody told me that the people of Texas think art died with the passing of Elizabeth Ney. Upstairs in her studio was an exhibition of canvases by local artists: bluebonnet fields and other Texas symbols impressionistically rendered.

In the capitol I saw two darkish historical paintings by H. A. McArdle: *Dawn at Alamo* and *Battle of San Jacinto*, and one by W. H. Huddle: *The Surrender of Santa Anna*. With the work of Lungkwitz, Petri, v. Iwanski, Madame Lavender, Onkerdonk, etc., they constitute more or less Texas painting during the latter half of last century. Nothing I was able to discover gave me reason to think that this line of expression is not what the biologists call an extinct species. I found no evidence of derivation from this activity, except a copy of *Dawn at Alamo* done in the modern manner by a Texas painter on the W.P.A. and hanging in a high school in Dallas.

At five o'clock Dr. Ratchford took me to call on families in whose possession were works of Richard Petri, a Dresden painter who came to Texas in 1851. They were exquisite miniatures of Texans in landscapes, and charmingly done portraits. Of Mme. Lavender's work I saw nothing. It is spread all over the state. Mme. Lavender was drawn to Texas from Paris, where she studied art under Delaroche, by pictures of live oaks hung with moss. Regrettably it doesn't say whose pictures those were. I was going to see more work by Petri, but the clouds with a beginning sunset light caught our attention, and I was told of a new scenic road the state had built into the mountains on which the people of Austin would drive out and look at the sunset.

Suggesting I might learn more about the state's painting by seeing the scenery from this road than from seeing old Texas in terms of Düsseldorf, I suggested we take the drive.

The road ran in among green hills along the swollen river deep below. Bull Creek was too full, and we dared not cross and missed the sunset. The river and its wooded banks and forelands reminded in the waning light of Claude Lorrain's wash drawing, *The Tiber above Rome*.

There is still about Texas something of the devil-may-care, pure-of-heart, and men-are-men stuff, which, through the radio and the movies we have come to associate with the cowboy. The pureness of heart is discovered in the fact that for an art teacher to sit in the newly created chair of the university, he must have an absolutely clean moral slate. The circle in which I heard this being discussed didn't permit me to express my wonder in words I might have used in Woodstock. I said: "What exactly has that to do with teaching art?" I was told I'd be surprised. An "oil-man" had deeded money to the university for the purpose of establishing an art department, and among such powers for good in Austin, artists are at best considered Bohemians.

The chair could not be filled by a woman teacher. "Why not?" No, art was sufficiently "sissy" already. With a woman in the chair it would be hopelessly so. Men are men, and should be so even when artists.

As for the devil-may-care: while I was down here Texas elected a new governor. Some one or two politicians were running, when a popular radio announcer advertising flour, jokingly suggested to his listeners that they elect him. And they did! Now he is governor of Texas. There was to me, then, something infinitely pleasing and reassuring in that election. Where

else in the history of the world was that spirit extant? And wherever could it have found expression without bloodshed? It proves what a sound and stable thing is an American ship of state: a little child can steer it. A little child should not be given power over life and death, though. Since I was down there, the governor gave a convict thirty days reprieve that he might live with the fear of death for another month.

I drove back to Dallas the next day along the road I had come, and in the evening I was taken to see the movie *The Texans*. It is a play about the reconstruction period after the war, and a cattle picture as well. I had already learned enough about cattle to know that the immense herds of white-faced Herefords were only supering for the now almost extinct longhorns of that time. The five-and-ten perfume counter heroine stepping out immaculately from snow- and dust-storms, was harder to swallow. Harder than anything was it to sit there as a Northerner and feel responsible for the vile Reconstructionist trying to get the Herefords into his carpet bag, while his confreres in Washington waved the bloody shirt, murdered Lincoln and put Grant into the White House. Why didn't Major Littlefield come into the picture?

I drove to Norman, Oklahoma, to see Professor in English of the University of Oklahoma, W. S. Campbell, who has written *Kit Carson*, *Sitting Bull*, and other works on the old West.

The dome above Texas was transparently blue and the weather was hot. The hottest day yet. By going 60 I managed to keep fairly cool. I didn't pass many cars, and those I did pass were all old model T Fords. It would seem that models T's grown old go to Texas, where they are driven, full of people, over the

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roads at 20 m.p.h. With one ahead of you, and one coming towards you, you soon learn that you can pass one without running into the other.

As the sun rose higher, little white clouds came on the sky: white rabbits on a field of bluebonnets—it is not the subject I quarrel with, it is its rendering on canvas. And God blessed the clouds and bade them be fruitful and multiply and fill the dome, which they did. And they laid themselves in a ring around the horizon from where now and then one would run across the blue. And if I were lucky I'd drive under it as it crossed the road, and let its shadow caress my hot car. The landscape to all sides was large: prairies rolling and rolling with farms and their windmills tossing out there like ships at sea. (Men who sailed on the North Sea during the 'teens of this century and saw the Norwegian ships with their windmill pumps, will know where I get my simile.)

Thought while driving: the Texans get so tall and lean from stretching and looking at their great horizons. And when they turn to look at you, you can see the distances lingering in their eyes.

On this trip I felt it more than ever, when I indicated to a succession of hitchhikers that I was taking the first turn on my left. Each accepted the information with a resigned salute at me and my licence plate, while I tried to ease my conscience by telling it that to lift them all I should need a Greyhound bus.

However, when ahead of me I saw a woman walking, I stopped and offered her a lift. She was dressed in black, had on high-heeled black slippers, and carried a black leather suitcase. Her fingernails were painted red, and she was hot and tired. Sitting next to her was like sitting by a hot stove. She had come from Shreveport, Louisiana, yesterday and was hiking to Tulsa,

Oklahoma, and when I lifted her across the state line she could have had me arrested for white slavery.

What stories people tell themselves to keep their spirits up as they walk for miles on end under the hot sun, I neither know nor know how to find out, for I doubt if people themselves know. What ever it be, I doubt if it is lifted into the realm of consciousness as thoughts communicable in words, and subject to the x-ray of reason, which would show up the story for a boneless structure. Perhaps they tell themselves no stories. Perhaps they only walk.

I asked my passenger about the country we came through. From the way she used English, I thought she might be a teacher and able to enlighten me. She wasn't, though. She was a city product, and on the road here as out of place as starlings blown onboard ship off Hatteras. One thing she did tell me was that the reason schools weren't out was because *vacation does not start until the cotton picking season*. If I had had a candid camera, I'd have gone in and taken a picture of one of those hot classrooms and published it under that caption.

Suddenly I came into mountains. They lay there as if dropped on the prairie for no geological reason whatever. A scenic road had been built through them with places for the tourist to get out and look, which I did. And wherever I looked I was reminded of Wanda Gag's landscapes, and when I suggested this to painters in Norman and Dallas, I was pleased to have them agree with me: the same playful contours, the same humorous, bubble-like trees.

Mr. Campbell wasn't about, but at the university I met the teachers of painting and sculpture, and also an artist who was working on his doctor's degree. I asked him what was his thesis. His thesis was a score of wood panels he was carving for the



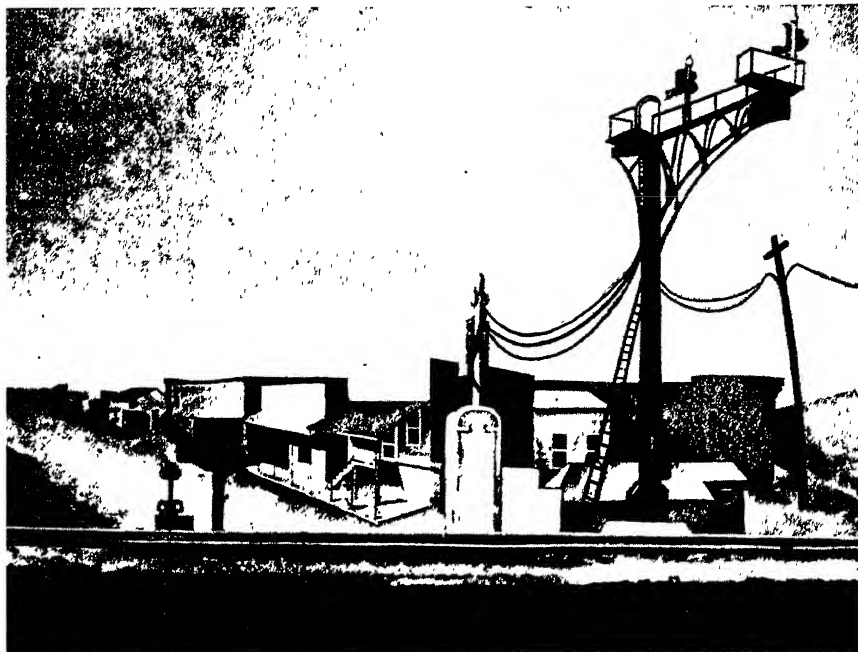
university, each to be accompanied by an explanatory essay or note. The teachers claimed a native school of painting for Oklahoma, and I regret there was no work about, by which I might have seen what constituted this school. A summer class of elderly lady students was in session, each solving in oil a problem given her by the teacher, who wasn't at the moment present: a storm.

"Using exclusively your imagination and such experience as you have had with actual storms?" I asked. They all agreed, and none minded my looking, as steering their brushes each imaginatively rode her individual storm.

I also saw some 24 x 24 canvases where the students had been told to divide the space into four squares and in each paint the same landscape seen in the morning, noon, and evening light and at night.

The art schools comprize easel and mural painting, lithography, designing, sculpture, ceramics, music, drama, etc. There are eleven teachers and six hundred pupils. The head of the art department is a Swede, Professor Jacobson, whom everybody I spoke to in Norman praised highly. Professor Jacobson has revived and encouraged traditional Indian painting among present-day Indians, and if you ask me what good that is, I'll say: In so far as painting is the pictorial expression of that which a civilization apprehends through its reason, imagination, and perception, it might be interesting to us to see what the Indian will invent of pictorial symbols for the occurrences and appearances in ours. (Even as it might interest a philologist to hear the names and expressions the original Indian languages would coin for those appearances and occurrences.)

However, I am afraid it would be difficult to breed such vacuum tube cultures. Germs of sophistication would be bound to leak into the tube with the gadgets of our civilization. Lo, if



*West Texas Town*  
[Oil]

VERNON HUNTER



*Horses Against the Sky*  
[Oil]

THOMAS H. BENTON



*California Hills*  
[Oil]

EDWARD BRUCE

he didn't take up Picasso outright, would at least be made self-conscious, and the "self" whose reactions he would express would not be his own, but that of a brave long since in the happy hunting grounds. It would take a great Indian artist to do this: to express the reaction of such an imaginary brave, without making of it a title page for the *New Yorker: Sitting Bull's Conception of the T.V.A.*

I shall nevertheless be the last to deny the delight I got from what I saw down here, or from what I have seen exhibited in New York of that kind of work. Still, I have seen nothing but symbols of the ancient dances, which, I presume, cannot go on forever.

Jerry Bywaters took me to call on the second of the "American Primitives" I was to meet on this trip: Mr. Martin, a grand figure, a one-time cowhand, eighty-one years old, straight, and looking like a tall Mark Twain—bushy and silvery hair, eyebrows, and moustache; eyes keen and humorous. His work had had the recommendation of Thomas Craven who wrote him up for the *Dallas News* with the consequence that Dallas stormed his house and bought him out at from two to five dollars a piece. By now, however, his walls were again covered with quaint oils and water colors.

His success had not gone to his head. He received us on equal terms, and courteously showed us his work. I liked less his landscapes, painted in transparent colors over enlarged photographs in which the artist's sense of elimination and composition could have no play. But his still life oil paintings of cakes and fruit were the tip-top of primitivism. They were charming and amusing, but even so, I could not recommend them to my friends. It takes either a house furnished like his own, or else an exceedingly

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catcornered, modern flat to support anything as naïve as this, and my friends all live in surroundings complementary to art of a more dominant type.

In Bywaters' car we went the thirty-nine miles to Denton, that I might see the art department of the Texas State College for Women. Miss Mary Marshall, the genial and capable head of the art schools showed us about: spacious class rooms and the best equipped schools I had yet seen. In the galleries where the students show their work, a well-hung exhibition of charcoal drawings was on view. Owing to the overpowering insistence of the medium, it looked like a one-man show. The subjects were flowers, landscape, figure, machinery, and portraits. I believe that any young painter painting Mexicans will have a hard time disclaiming the Rivera influence. This is not because the painter consciously or unconsciously imitates Rivera, but because the subject refuses to show itself to the student in any but Rivera's terms.

At Denton they teach art in all its branches, applied and otherwise. In the next room was an exhibition by a class in interior decorating. I know even less about this kind of stuff, but I was taken in by the accomplished looks of colored drawings showing modern rooms. Considering their fellow artists next door expect to make a living selling pictures to homes like these here depicted, the interior decorators might have shown pictures hanging on their walls and incidentally have made their rooms more livable to intelligent people.

Driving back to Dallas we came through a little town named Carrollton. Circling the big square we saw painted in oil on a window of a saloon, a piece of folk art: an almost lifesize longhorn. Closing my eyes I saw, striding the after-image of this animal, a cowboy's dream: a sprawling nude put there by a

Carroll of Carrollton. (See also the permanent collection of the Detroit Museum of Art.)

Approaching Dallas and looking about at the scenery where, you might say, the forces building Dallas are throwing tin cans at the Texas landscape and letting the weeds grow rank, Bywaters said: "This can't be painted—until . . . , etc."

In the evening I attended a dinner at his home, where present was Mr. John H. McGinnis, art and literary critic, and editor of *The Southwest Review*, who was treated with respect and listened to, and for whose sake everybody had on a necktie. Also present were Texas painters and writers, and later blew in, unshaven and refreshingly disrespectful, Tom Stell, Jr., whose sketch in the basement of the Dallas Museum had struck me as one of the best things I had seen on my trip, and whom (when my advice was asked) I had recommended for the empty chair of the U. of T. in Austin.

It was a good party, and all the subjects I have mentioned under Texas were here discussed, including the obelisk.

Leaving Dallas was like leaving home for the third or fourth time this trip. Through Fort Worth and along devious routes we drove to Lubbock where my architect friend put us up in a hotel of his making, through a note to the manager.

The road for the first hundred miles was well-worn black-top, winding through prairies with the view cut off by oak trees that never seem to grow big, and by mesquite, which looks like a small scraggly willow. Suddenly this kind of flora vanished and its place was taken by a cheerful little cedar which followed us for a few miles. Then the mesquite took possession again and kept it. Through all these changes the heat was terrific and steady.

We came to good roads where the air recently had been washed by rain, and, owing to the quality of the cement below us, was able to surge through our ventilator at 60 m.p.h. Towards five o'clock, mountains of the kind we know from New Mexico painters crept into view: solitary on the flat land, sloping sides, tops as level as a table's, and known as "mesas."

We were climbing imperceptibly and the landscape was changing. A new state was making itself felt. We stopped when the first mesa was abeam, as one of us wanted to take a photograph of it. Our car was the only human habitat in sight, and when I stopped the motor there were no sounds. Except for the cement road and the fences along it, there were no evidences of man. I could see no purpose in these fences, but the elevator boy at the hotel in Lubbock, who at other seasons is a student in the State Engineering School there, told me cattle grazed here in the spring. He also told me this school had an art department—"only for women, of course," he added. We were getting into the far West.

In the morning from the eleventh floor of the hotel I looked out the window and over the flat-roofed red brick houses interspersed with trees, and across the plateau which is second in smoothness to only a calm lake.

Along good roads we drove towards Clovis just inside the New Mexico border. We were as yet on the cap-rock, so-called, and the country, for lack of a more expressive word, was *flat*. It was cultivated in cotton, corn, and sorghum, so much of it that I saw our car as a blue beetle running over the floor of a granary.

During the afternoon we came to the edge of the cap-rock and descended in two precipitous miles almost all the feet we had climbed the day before. It was a spectacular descent: picturesque, twisting, touristy. Twice we stopped to have the cam-

era take in the scenery; and the camera's *sang froid* on these occasions never fails to impress me: it'll tackle anything! But *there* should be a warning to the traveller: when the camera gives forth what it took in on the trip, its story is qualified by its smallness and the faultiness of its lens.

We had descended into a valley so hot that we had to close all the apertures on the car to be able to breathe. The colors around us were the earth colors, and through them ran the white road on and on. No evidence of man. It became a bore in its sameness and in the heat. The landscape, I thought, was unpaintable, because it was only a background, and in this case a background for nothing—like a piece of the clear sky. Or like the middle of the sea in a calm or in a storm, I thought, and found also that a bore. But then I imagined a piece of wood adrift on it, and the desolation took on significance. This piece of wood shaped by man's hand on the background of the impersonal sea: evidence, maybe, of a ship and a crew that never made port.

As a foil for the primeval, and to make a landscape significant it seems necessary to have a hint of man, or at least of life. No matter how high a mountain, it does not reach meaningfully for the sun, as does even the smallest weed growing on it. The universe conveys not as much interest in its own survival as does the meanest bit of life.





ON THE map the roads between Clovis and Taos are marked: "paved," "improved," "dirt," "under construction," and—worse than anything—"contemplated." Driving over a contemplated road is bad for a car.

Route 60 was paved, and to the sides of it and far away lay the mesas. It didn't seem to matter which route we took, we never came near one; the mesas remained on the horizon, true to their images in New Mexico painting. Nevertheless, and reports of mirages to the contrary, we believed they were there.

They are strange-looking mountains, all of one architecture, and native, it would seem, to this part of the world only. Looking at them, the question sneaked on me: "Is the Aztec temple pyramid copied on this formation?" I should have been afraid to advance the thought, had not my companion said: "They look like something the Aztecs might have left here."

The first mountains we encountered—about fifty miles inside the border—looked like the Catskills, but farther away rose a giant chain: the Rockies designing themselves against the sky. As we came nearer I began to recognize among them mountain motifs I knew from the painting *California Hills* by Edward

Bruce, a picture which, from lack of knowledge of the subject, I had always considered romanticism in the hard, decorative, modern style. I realized now it was "truth," as it enabled me to see the mountains in that manner: chain beyond chain beyond chain, the distances in between modified by luminous mists.

But the Catskills in the foreground were more to my taste, as for years I had lived with them in and out of pictures. Their wood-covered gullies and ridges stood out against each other and the more so the more horizontal the light became. Down the slopes the green of their flora changed to a green I didn't recognize from home, and where the earth flattened out, the ground was speckled with a bushy weed of a whitish color and of a texture that suggested Van Gogh brushwork. This "weed" was the sagebrush, but as yet we didn't know it.

The road ran through the center of the flats, giving us the same scene to each side. My companion stopped the car and stood up to look around—and if he could become articulate and tell me what he is looking for, or seeing, or even looking at on these occasions, I think I could learn a lot about him.

We lost our way and drove up to one of the farms scattered over the landscape, to ask directions. These places all looked alike: a windmill, a few smallish trees, a 30 x 40 dwelling, and three or four sheds. None of it in good repair, and all of it in need of paint. A Texas painter told me the reasons farms down here have no paint is the sand blast, unknown up north. I had wondered what sort of people lived in these farms, and now I found out: folks—exactly like the folks you find on a Bearsville farm, except, maybe, leaner. A young woman opening the door when I knocked: snappy and kind in her Sears Roebuck frock. Behind her in the kitchen her mother-in-law in darker clothes. In a few words settling between them which way we had better

take. Then turning and telling me, and "Good-bye." Nothing regional about their behavior; it was only the landscape that had changed since we left home.

I had thought to make Taos, but the last sixty miles had been under construction, and our speed had been reduced to 20 m.p.h.—and besides the car needed a change of oil, a tightening, and a wash. Its whole front was covered with a gray, hard, lacquer-like mass of squashed bugs. Also, the glimpse we had had of Santa Fe had been intriguing; we decided to go no further, but to put up here overnight and become acquainted with a new kind of architecture.

At the garage I was handed a chamber of commerce sheet called *Santa Fe, The City Different* which I proceeded to read. It listed "Points Notable for Distinctive Type of Architecture" and enumerated garages, hotels, department store buildings, etc. I knew the Pueblo-built adobes, an architecture predicated by the building material at hand, and being fond of a genuine thing of whatever kind, I resent shams. The houses I saw here were built of cement blocks and plastered in imitation of adobes. The filling stations carried the idea into the ludicrous, and it gave the town a strange and exciting aspect like a fairground, or like Coney Island, and meant no more nor any less: it was made for *your* sake.

While waiting for the car I walked about. On the plaza I saw a Civil War monument among trees and shrubbery and went in to read the inscription on it, as I do whenever I see one. To my surprise I saw it was a Union memorial. There had been no other sign of it, but I was, then, definitely out of the South.

There was a preponderance of souvenir shops in Santa Fe: Indian silver, pottery, weaving, leather work, basket work—all very fine-looking, and as far as I have been able to judge, the



*Cattle Country, West Texas*  
[Pastel]

JERRY BYWATERS



only folk art and craft in the country made on a payable commercial scale.

Coming through the South we had seen, suspended from roadside trees—in a manner to make one suspect a potter's wheel in a near-by glade—factory-made earthenware called Georgia pottery in Georgia and Florida pottery in Florida. Through Louisiana and Texas the model had changed into statues of steers—herds of them at every filling station—rows of plaster-cast longhorns with horns as long as the whole animal. While the owner would be filling your tank, you'd get out and look at his collection, and shortly be tackled by his wife who would ask you to buy one for a souvenir. "I'd like to," you'd smile, realizing the irrefutable logic of your argument, "but I'd never get it home whole. Those long horns would break off." (I shouldn't be giving away this little game. Those people have to earn their bread as well as you and I. Besides this is sculpture. I should be writing about painting.)

As an answer to that, she'll pick up a steer, pull out a horn from its socket, unhook the elastic with which it is ingeniously fastened to the other horn, take out that horn too, put all three items in a box, put on the lid and: "One dollar, please."

The Indian designs one sees in the Southwest, whether in silver, pottery, weaving or any other medium, are original ones and expressive of the Indian cultures. To my mind they can hold their own with any in the world. I presume that as designs they still have a function among the Indians, even if no new variations occur, and even if the source from which these motifs and symbols sprang runs no longer. In the shops of Santa Fe and in the Indian roadstands en route their function is no different from that of other merchandise. It is "hand made," I believe, but it is made in mass, and I doubt with any more love than are tin cans.

It is manufactured for the tourist trade, which—based on the consumer's uninformed longing to identify himself with something genuine, foreign, and fine, on his inability to judge, and on his ignoble ambition to show he has been there—is second only to the dope trade.

Perhaps the reader should wish to contradict me on this. If so, I can give him some good points, for I have been there, and to prove it I can show him my watch fob: an exquisite little silver eagle with a genuine turquoise in the center, of which the Indian who sold it to me said that it used to belong to a Pueblo chief, and therefore cost a little more. If, on the other hand the reader agrees with me, I can quote Rockwell Kent: *"When the Eskimo in Alaska encountered the American tourist he began promptly to make the kind of art the tourists like. It is not primitive art, or sophisticated art, or even horrible art. It has just stopped being art."*

The night was cool at this altitude of seven thousand feet. We were given quilts by the owner of the adobe tourist camp, and we needed them. For the first time in a long while we fell asleep easily, and slept comfortably through the night.

The seventy miles to Taos were, to begin with, along a good road that took us in among reddish mountains sparsely covered with grass and dark cedars: a Puvis de Chavannes sort of setting. A little too much of it for the life it supported. One missed his romantic Greek groups.

Suddenly—things happen suddenly at 55 m.p.h.—suddenly we came into a green valley populated by Mexicans speaking Spanish, and living in adobes so obviously not built for the trade, that, driving through, it almost embarrassed the tourist to look down into their intimate backyards. Along the roadside little Rivera models were selling ripe apricots in old coffee tins from

their stands: thatch laid over four poles stuck into the ground.

We came into mountains again where a new road was being built for forty miles. Our carburetor had difficulties breathing at this altitude, and stalled whenever we had to haul off the road to let a cloud of dust hiding a truck roll by. To the left of us was a canyon a thousand feet deep, separated from the road by a wall of dust and pebbles eleven inches high. At the bottom of the canyon ran the Rio Grande, looking no bigger than a drink of water.

Nothing I had seen in New Mexico painting had led me to expect the grandeur of this route, but as I drove along I began to see the reason for that. At least I saw the reason why I should not have chosen it for a subject: it was not sufficiently related to man.

Staying at Ranchos del Taos, it took me a good day to get over my unfavorable impression of garage adobes and the artiness I had seen in Santa Fe. Artiness swims in the wake of art colonies, and is encouraged by chambers of commerce. In a shop window I had seen a scrap book, so called in so many letters on the cover. But they were scattered all over it, to relieve you of the Philistine feeling of having to read them straight—and as was that book, so was every dam'd thing in the window.

But in Taos I got over it. Perhaps the season for what my companion calls "screwiness" hadn't set in. (Summer is the time for it in Woodstock.) Anyway, I found my prejudices vanish as I began looking around. What I thought was artificial about the architecture, I found to be genuine, and a direct outcome of using the materials at hand and the labor used to handling those materials. The natural clays come in shades of red and yellow, besides black and white, and are applied like kalsomine. The



houses thus built made more comfortable living quarters than any I have been in, with walls as vermin-proof as those of igloos. That incidentally they are good-looking might have been an encouragement to build them, but it struck me as being incidental. Cheap and well built homes were the incentive, and the style inherent in the material gave them emotional import. Regarding architecture of any kind, I have learned more from one sentence in Helen Huss Parkhurst's book *Beauty*, than from all others I have read: "*Most rooms and many buildings in the interest of utility are given no emotional import whatsoever.*" This opened my eyes to the fact that a building or room may be regarded in the light of its emotional values.

If I hadn't liked the people I met here, and if I didn't think those people would like to be left in peace to do their work and enjoy their landscape and each other, I should tell more about their houses, their scenery, and their seasons. But I suspect they feel about "the wake" as we do in Woodstock, and as I presume they do in Provincetown, or New Hope, or anywhere else artists foregather.

Although I have no reason to consider the following anecdote anything but trivial, it might give you an idea of the forms that swim and the shapes that creep in the wake: a citizen came walking down the Bearsville road, when another and somewhat fatter citizen drove up to him in a big car and asked secretively—as if asking for the red-light district—"Where is the art colony?" Without slackening his gait, the first citizen made a gesture towards the valley: "This here is called an art colony."—"Yes," prissily laughed the other, "I know—but where are the artists and the models?" The first citizen stopped and said: "Do you see the house on top of that mountain there? That's the Overlook House. It's a climb, but your car can make it in low.

When you get there, leave your car and walk down into the woods on the other side and keep walking. You might take off your necktie so they won't think you are spying." The second citizen looked at the first citizen's neck and seeing he had on a necktie, thanked him and laid his course for the top of Overlook.

In Taos I suppose they send them out into the desert, as in Provincetown they'd send them out to sea. It is a kind not difficult to handle; there are types far worse than that.

We were comfortably installed in a guest ranch among friends from Dallas, who knew the country well and took a pride in showing it to us. I felt about the three-rooms-and-bath adobe given us, as a hermit crab must feel on finding a conch. Since I was in the war, thick walls, although I know they aren't bomb- or even splinter-proof, never fail to give me a feeling of security. It was meditating on that feeling, while I was lying under the quilts, that made me wonder if our age possibly could evolve an architecture predicated by our fear and suspicion of one another. I saw the city of today reaching upwards like stalks of celery. Might it not, after the Flight of the Bombers, rebuild itself reaching downward like carrots?

Andrew Dasburg, once of Woodstock but now of Taos, took me about to see the work of other Taos painters. Most of them were busy on government jobs, and what I saw of their work convinced me that artists here, as everywhere, are giving of their best to these murals, albeit keeping in mind an attitude expressed in Forbes Watson's words about logic demanding the use of symbols both simple and broad in appeal.

Their easel work showed this attitude less or not at all. In it new symbols were being created and tested. From seeing the output of the whole year I learned, somewhat to my surprise,

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that Taos has four full-fledged seasons, of which—as in Woodstock—the summer is the least paintable. I was able to see the surrounding hills and skies of this month as the painters here had seen them; and each viewpoint personal to its owner, yet all of them indigenous to New Mexico, and therefore regional. I saw some snow scenes, in which I sensed an indefinable hint of Indian.

Having gone on this trip to look for American landscape painting, and finding that I wanted to identify myself with the work I saw here, as I had in Texas, and as I have been doing in Woodstock for years, I found myself jealously looking for Mexican and French influences. I cannot truthfully say I saw any, but there was, here and there, a hint of something I had seen before—a whiff of a familiar spice, the identity of which I vainly tried to establish, until I heard of John Marin's visit to Taos. "Nobody had seen the desert until he pointed it out," I heard it said.

I recall in particular a water color showing mountains in the desert, which explained itself in Marin terminology. "That dark zigzag across the face of the mountains," I asked, "is that an arbitrary hint of Navajo?"—I was told it was a cloud shadow following the contours of the hills. On my trip through the desert I saw that effect again and again: long darks zigzagging the slopes and ridges until I came to believe the Navajos got the motif so extensively used in their decorations from cloud shadows on their mountains.

I spent an evening in the comfortable adobe of the painter Ward Lockwood, talking with him and his wife about the work being done in the Southwest. To my question as to what might cause the difference between what we called the Woodstock school and the Texas school of painting, he said it lay in the dif-

ference of atmosphere. Over Texas, and especially over the desert the air was clear and the visibility high. Objects stood out, and the distances defined themselves sharply. "On the other hand," said he, "you fellows in Woodstock—" and in his own particular words he proceeded to explain how the luminous soft edges in the New York landscape derive from the moistness of the atmosphere in that state—with all of which, when stated as I do it here, I can thoroughly agree.

Also Richard F. Howard, Director of the Museum in Dallas, has said: "*The sharp edges and clarity of tone in their (the Texas painters) work had been generated more by the atmosphere and appearance of the Texas landscape than by any admiration for the primitive.*" (*Thirteen Dallas Artists.*)

Anybody looking at the Southwest will see the truth in this, even if the esthetes who have studied Jean Fouquet, but never seen the Texas landscape, have a hard time believing it.

Discussing art in general, I recall my host's saying: "*For a painting to be good, it has to contain a balanced amount of Representation, Abstraction, and Personality.*"

In considering the difficult and elusive concept "personality" as it is conveyed to us in a picture, I believe Lockwood agreed with me—or else he didn't—when I, in trying to account for it, suggested it be defined as the difference between absolute representation of the painter's subject, and the degree of simplification and unification to which he has abstracted it. "When man discovered that the nearest he could come to making a replica of a mammoth, was a colored outline symbolizing one, he must—to preserve his self respect—have told himself he was a maker of symbols. Since that day—although at times he has had his personality swamped by the public's demand for representation—since then, aside from his joy in showing his ability, he has

taken a joy in presenting his personality by inventing new symbols. Particularly in our century, where it is almost swamping representation.

"The fact that an artist becomes conscious of the limitation peculiar to him, will enable him to cultivate that peculiarity, and make of himself a finer personality and a better artist. He will be able to manipulate the 'difference' and abstract his subject deliberately in a way to make his painting a work of art. If he makes too much of it, his work will become mannered, and his manner—if popular—might become a 'spice.'

"The difference between the ways in which different painters symbolize the same subject is then the difference between their personalities."

Lockwood—as I remember—thought that personality could be only partly expressed by choice of symbols. Technique was also a medium, and so was choice of subject.

I suppose the Lockwood formula for judging a work of art can be attacked on innumerable counts, and Mr. Lockwood thought so too. I myself have found it a working hypothesis as good as any for analyzing a canvas. It might amount to no more than giving the ancient quarrel a new name; nevertheless, if I like a picture I find its R.A.P. quotient to suit me, and if I don't, I can prove—even to myself—that the three are unbalanced. It is of course meant as a formula to help one analyzing a picture, and is not a recipe for making masterpieces.

Without having considered the reason for it, I know I harbor a feeling of apology towards that most tenuous of abstractions: my betters, whenever I praise anything. On the other hand, if timidly I belittle anything, and in particular, if I refrain from judgment, I see their nominal halos nodding.



*New Mexico Landscape*  
[Oil]

ANDREW DASBURG



*Autumn at Arroyo Sego*  
[Water color]

WARD LOCKWOOD

In Taos are two art galleries, each run by the painters who show their work in them, and between which—strange to relate—there is no feud. It was with that above-mentioned feeling of apology I stood in one of these galleries looking at a water color showing four dancing Indians. I hadn't seen anything exactly like it before: rich color, little modeling, four figures without fore- or background stepping across the paper. No hesitation in the execution. No influences anywhere. It was something new. Although tremendously intrigued by it, a certain wariness kept me from saying anything, except asking Dasburg, who had taken me here, what artist had made it. He told me it was the work of Emil Bisttram, and suggested I make a call on him.

My attention was also directed to a canvas, the foreground of which was taken up by a long trough full of milk from which a couple of dozen little pigs were drinking. It showed a keen observation of little pigs wanting to get at a trough. I was reminded of kicking hind legs and curling tails seen in Luther's farm up home, but I wondered at the subject here in Taos. The background was an apple orchard in bloom running off towards the vanishing point over emerald grass, such as I hadn't seen since I was in Bearsville. Furthermore, the pigs were white, and not the colored ones you see down here.

It was the work of Miss Kitts, the third primitive I was to encounter: a woman who made a living from selling hand lotion from door to door, and who was trying to get on the New Mexico Federal Art Project, and who now wanted to sell this picture for fifty dollars. On inquiring further I was told this artist had an exceptionally vivid visual memory. The scene with the pigs was one that had impressed her in her childhood on the farm up north, and the other pictures she had were made from



similar recollections. A prairie fire on which she at present was at work, was one she had seen when a little girl. Representation, Abstraction, and Personality? In the work of the primitive it is representation which concerns the painter. He has not become aware of his involuntary abstractionism, hence not developed it for use, hence not made of himself a conscious personality in paint. He functions in a realm where an absolute standard can be applied to art: the standard of resemblance, and remains the Naïve, who grieves when he can't make it look like the model.

Peter was taken to see an Indian dance at Santo Domingo, which, he told me, he could not believe was not put on for tourists. In the meanwhile I was taken to see the master of the *Four Dancing Indians*, Emil Bisttram.

He lived in a handsomely furnished adobe with a well-appointed studio adjoining. When the painter introducing me asked him to show me his work, he courteously agreed to do so, and we followed him into his studio. For the next hour and a half he lifted canvases off their racks and placed them before us. Most of them were large, some were full length life-size figures, and all of them were giving the spectator the impression he was looking at the collection of a Maecenas who had the good taste or the good luck to acquire the very best examples of the best known American and foreign painters.

These were his own works, though—and being given no clue from the man who had taken me here, and being unable to put a plausible interpretation on what I saw, I sat as if in a daze not knowing what to say, except: "That's good," which applied truthfully to any picture there.

There was a life-size *Cowboy* which would have made the less guarded exclaim: "Eugene Speicher!" A beautiful snow land-

scape with three black crows: "Ward Lockwood!" There were Rockwell Kent—Howard Cook—John Marin—Diego Rivera—Picasso! There were Woodstock painters, and Provincetown painters, just about everybody you ever heard of, and every one at his best—or better. It was amazing. It was the most unbelievable one-man show I ever saw. I was completely at sea and afraid to look at my fellow visitor for fear our eyes might say too much. "Representation, Abstraction, and Personality?" I thought. These paintings, as far as I could see, were nothing but the first: pure representation of other painters, and as such not abstracted, hence giving no inkling of this man's mind. In them personality was nil. I began to wonder about the four dancing Indians, as also about a handsome abstraction in oil showing the Indian hummingbird dance, and thought I should have to look into Indian painting.

Emil Bisttram, who, while showing us his work, had been chary of words, now said: "That's all."

"Well," I said, "that is indeed—" I was going to say, "some show!" but I said, "a lot of work."

I should not have written any of the above, had not Bisttram then turned to me and with a gesture of dismissal towards the paintings said: "I am through with that stuff"—and had he not also and in answer to my question as to what he meant by that (obvious) statement said: "Those are my crutches," and by way of elucidation added: "A man, like a baby starting to walk, supports himself by a footstool: Cezanne. Next, a chair: Picasso—and so on until he can walk alone."

"Well then," I said, "and where have you chosen to walk?"

"*Ad astra*," he said meaningly; and courteously: "I'll show you." From the next room he brought out ten lead pencil drawings all neatly matted, glazed, and framed, and lined them up

against the wall for us to look at. They were non-objective drawings, and as delicately and painstakingly wrought as anything I have seen in that medium. Infinite patience, and exquisiteness of workmanship bore witness to a great faith in and a great love for—something.

In somewhat different words I said as much, and asked what this something might be, for I thought it must be more than the love of making meaningless, however accomplished, designs.

Tentatively getting no answer to that question, I asked how certain hair-fine white lines among hair-fine black lines had been achieved—were they white ink, or had he scratched them? He told me they were made by simply leaving the paper clean. We looked some more: the usual forms of the non-objective artist—the sphere, the cube, and the pyramid—projected here in two dimensions as the circle, the square, and the uncountable variations of the triangle, aside from lines running wild all over the paper, yet with the other forms making pleasing, symmetrical patterns.

Being intrigued by this means of expression, I endeavored again to make Emil Bisttram tell me about them by saying: "Every one is a beautiful design, but aside from that, and the joy I take in the workmanship, I can see nothing in them. They represent nothing. They are abstracted from nothing. They convey no idea of your personality."

He answered: "I didn't expect they would—to you. These drawings are a language in themselves. A foreign language to the general, but conveying a message which can be conveyed in no other way, and only to those who have had the same psychic experience."

Not being a mystic, I realized I should have to be satisfied

with enjoying the patterns without getting the message, as I do, with even greater success, when I look at Egyptian hieroglyphs. Being unable to believe in anything but that which my sound perception and reason reveal to me as the universe, I have to discount the vapors I hear spoken of as "experiences incommunicable" as owing to their owners' inability to use that obvious means of communication which stands when all others fail: the country's language. You'll notice how few people who have been educated to use the language profess mysticism—except when they want to use it as a means to guide or to rule those who do.

Of the two, I would rather risk being accused by the sophisticate of making platitudes, when I put an idea into language clear enough for them to understand, than of gaining their respect by mystically hinting at such an idea through obscurities.

Before we left his studio Mr. Bisttram showed us a sketch for a Treasury Project competition on which he was working, and in which the demands of logic had been complied with, in so far as to make the symbols simple and broad in appeal. Also in the Department of Justice Building, Washington, D.C., is a mural, *Contemporary Justice and Woman* by this artist, in which those same demands have been equally well met and in which, to quote from the simple and broadly appealing Art Guide: "*The center panel of the mural shows woman freed from the bondage of the age-long custom which made her man's chattel.*" In neither the sketch nor in the finished mural did I see, or do I think I saw, any difference between that which I intuitively recognized as having been the painter's subject and that which he had managed to make of it in his pictures. No evidence of a struggle. A bright fire without heat.

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Wherever I had come, I had seen artists at work on pictures for the coming Carnegie International, or for any or all of the following shows: Golden Gate, Corcoran, Whitney, New York World's, Chicago Art, Pennsylvania Academy, St. Louis, etc., etc.—for directors are jealous of their exhibitions, and all want pictures that haven't been shown before. *It will not do* to have a learned critic observe: "That canvas we saw at 'Carnegie' last fall."

The Texas State College for Women has a summer school in Taos. The teacher, Alexandre Hogue, who is a Texan, showed me the work of the students, and I looked at it with a feeling of apology towards the abstractions I mentioned on a previous page, for I thought these students were doing excellent work.

Hogue took me to his studio and showed me the canvas he was working on for the coming Carnegie International, and with the idea for which he had been struggling for over three years. Hogue was born in the Panhandle of Texas and had seen the grazinglands there disintegrate under the plow, and considered the catastrophe important enough to be told about in paint. Apparently he told it convincingly. Those to whose interest it was not to have it told, started collecting money to buy the pictures for the purpose of destroying them. That is "notoriety," but it seems to have tempted other men, not of Texas, to copy Hogue's forms into their pictures.

With understandable bitterness Hogue points out how these men came no nearer to the soil than the automobile highway, as witness their ignorance of functional details on such things as plows—how a double-tree is attached—or how a "dead-man" is built in a fence corner. "Their cult will rationalize this ignorance by saying such detail is unimportant, but I claim it is important! Not just for the sake of detail, but because the form of

a thing is more beautiful when it is authentic and functional."

One may agree with that, yet also—and without being in agreement with the men who mimicked Hogue—agree with: the form of a thing is more beautiful when it is simplified and abstracted beyond its function. A flaw in both contentions is that they are stated as absolutes.

Having been informed about his evolution as a painter by himself, and having seen his subjects in Texas, I found it not at all hard to see his landscape as he saw it, or to sympathize with the protest evinced in his Carnegie picture *Mother Earth Laid Bare*. I have since discussed that painting with a number of artists, and while I accept their premises only to be able to understand their own work better and, while doing so, to speak of this picture as being respectively: without feeling for paint, lacking in esthetic values, literary, mannered, propaganda, posterish, quilted satin, a joke, too much imagination, etc. etc. Painters among themselves are not a charitable lot, even if at times they can show a common front towards their mutual problems. I doubt if Hogue expected better. As I saw it, he was waiving his fellows' approval to put his protest across.

Hogue's painting shows soil erosion. In the foreground among the gullies stands the wreck of the plow that caused it, and from there the erosion goes back to the top of the canvas where the green earth is seen carrying a farm and its windmill and some barbwire fence. The erosion is tan going into pinks, and as you look, the ridges and gullies take the shape of a woman prostrate on her back. That sounds as rank as words can make it, perhaps—but, if in justice to the artist the spectator looks beyond the school to which he subscribes, he might see in it the work of a man who has something poignant to say about his native soil, and because he is a painter, says it in paint.

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I called at the studio of Kenneth Adams, who is artist in residence at the University of New Mexico and who is doing six murals for the Coronado Library on a Carnegie Foundation project. He expressed himself on murals, and having accepted his premises, which was not difficult, it was easy to agree with him when he said murals should function architecturally and not be crowded with figures. They should be decorative rather than tell a story.

It all depends, I suppose, on what example comes into your mind, whether you agree or disagree with Adams. I had seen murals on my trip that made me agree with him. Things that reminded me of market signs, and side-show posters, and, in the Justice Building in Washington, D.C., even of wallpaper. But then, as over against that, there is the gospel according to Giotto in the Padua Arena.

We took route 64 along the Rio Grande back to Santa Fe, and arrived just as the New Mexico W.P.A. supervisor, Mr. Vernon Hunter, whose paintings I had been told to stop and look at, returned from the University of Colorado, where he had been hanging a show of his work. For that reason he had none to show me. He showed me, however, what people in New Mexico were doing on the F.A.P. and it looked as native to New Mexico and as different from the F.A.P. work I had seen in New York, as the latter work looked native to its state, and as the two states look different.

It made me wonder where the nation eventually will keep all the work thus being done and accumulated on the various Federal Art Projects throughout the land. All of it can't be hung on the walls of tax supported institutions. A museum in Wash-

ington, D.C.?—for the best of it deserves to be cared for as only museums can do it.

We drove to Albuquerque with the top down. The country around us was flat and rolling, but in the distance to both sides the mesas lifted themselves. The landscape became wilder and grander as we proceeded. The colors were red, with two greens, blue sky, and white clouds. Very white clouds. New Mexico has little fauna and flora, but its cloud life is richer and more fantastic than any I have seen in the sky wherever on earth I have been. The most prevalent of the species up there is a long, white shape with pointed ends and a hump towards the middle of its back. It casts a zigzag shadow on the mountains, and drifts about in three dimensions. Sometimes it vanishes in a fourth: it evaporates and leaves the sky blue.

The circle that lay around us was the greatest ever, and the most impressive in whose center I ever stood. Every sector of twenty degrees with its component segment of sky was enough to look at. A strange thing about the circle is that you don't have to keep the axis of your car along the same diagonal to remain in the center. If you turn, you merely cause another part of the periphery to approach you. If you see a delectable mountain on the horizon, aim your car at it, and the circle will slide in under you from that point of the compass, and the mountain will come gliding up to you. Then turn your wheel to prevent its sliding into you.

The sky covered over with black, powerful clouds. The sun was sending shafts of light through them, revealing spots of emerald grass so vividly that you thought somebody must have asked to have them revealed. A big purpose seemed to be stirring over these lands. Fairy tales were being told in Indian pic-



ture writing. The red mesa struck by the sun was defying the black sky. The wind up there was manhandling big clouds: Indians hunting buffaloes. I felt I was on a scene where important mythological events had happened, and were still happening.

We crossed the Rio Grande and drove along route 66 towards Gallup. To both sides of us were national forests, Indian reservations, cliff-dwellings, monuments, Pueblo ruins, lava beds, inscriptions, and lakes, and to one side even an "enchanted mesa"!

We came to the Great Divide and stopped where the government has put up a tower that the tourist might add fifty feet to his stature and see a little further. But fifty feet couldn't do much to improve the vista. Nor could any of man's doings detract from it, if, in the face of all this old grandeur, your clock-and calendar-conditioned sense of time had the strength to summon your sense of humor. Then you could meet with equanimity the noisy family from Brooklyn (vide licence plate) with whom we shared the platform on the tower. And meet also, and with enjoyment, the nice old man set to guard the Great Divide here, and the rest rooms. In his solitude among the mountains he had written a poem, which he pulled out of his pocket and showed me. It was an ode of advisement for you to leave the rooms as clean as you found them. "All the water on this side of the Divide runs into the Atlantic," he said, "and all the water on that side of the Divide runs into the Pacific"—and if you have been here, you will know what further he said about the two separate rest rooms with their partition on the dividing line.

Towards Gallup the road ran straight and good. Our top was up, and I was sitting back looking at the scenery. We were going fast. The long stretches, the good roads, the high legal

speed limit or the total absence of one, the condition of the car, and the lack of traffic all had worked on our minds as we had got further west—as I suppose it works on everybody's mind—and made us reconsider our agreement as to speed. At present we were doing *not* over 60.

A streamlined aluminum train running on tracks parallel to our road crept up on us and overtook us. "I wonder how fast he is going," Peter said, inviting me with his tone also to wonder. Interpreting my silence in his favor, he increased his speed to be able to supply me with an answer: the aluminum train was going 70—and so were we—but it was his birthday, and I said nothing. He knows he is a capable driver, far more in feel with speed and mechanics than I am. Fatalistically I looked at the engineer eyeing us from his cab. Fatalistically I saw the passengers sit leaned back in their seats reading their magazines. "If a front wheel flew off now, we'd both die," I thought, as the filling stations flew by one after another as though spelled *Fst—Fst—Fst—*. Seventy m.p.h. might not be fast ten years from now, but in our dog's day I didn't care to go any faster.

Far ahead on the road was a truck. Still further ahead the road curved, and no one could see what was coming. I wondered what Peter would do.

He took his foot off the gas. The streamlined train was a point or two abaft our starboard beam. It commenced to gain on us, and passed us as we hauled up under the stern of the truck, carefully timed to its speed. He hadn't used the brakes. The train engineer blew a salute in his siren. "Did you hear that!" Peter exclaimed. "He blew his siren to me!" "Yes," I said, "he did that."—"And that was the only word I spoke during that experience," I thought with some satisfaction.

Then we drove into Gallup.



WE WERE driving over the mesa with our top down. The landscape was widespread and monotonous to look at, wherefore I sat back and looked at a white cloud the wind seemed to be having difficulties with.

The wind? When you have watched the wind blow a cargo of merchandise southwestwards over three thousand miles of Atlantic ocean—and have thought of how at fifteen degrees north latitude it changes its horizontal direction for one vertical until at the height of about six thousand metres it blows itself back to north polar regions, taking with it a flock of clouds—perhaps you then have wondered about the destination of the wind and meditated on its final resting place. You might have recalled from *The Legends of Hading* the surmise about the foggy lands where the dying winds lay their eggs, and the wild hurricanes are hatched; and you might have remembered how the legends said we should never learn of those places, for the only one who knew had been dust these many centuries.

*"Dust and blown down the wind,"* it said. *"Carried far and carried farther . . . as one has a right to believe the dust of wanderers is carried, and the dust of those who long to wander."*

Alas, there is nothing grand about the wind's final resting place, nor about the final resting place of wanderers: have you ever cleaned house and moved a couch away from the wall to sweep under it? In there is where the storms die. In there is where the wind finally comes to rest, but the gray pussy willows (pocket-wool, they call it in Danish) are not its eggs. They are the soft and silent evidence of an old top-gallant breeze, which after many vicissitudes crept in here to die, while with its last strength it rolled into a sausage the dust of the sailor lad it once tried to blow off the yard, as he was taking in the main t'ga'n's'l. The little red thread you see in the pussy willow comes from the Oriental rug over by the piano. The wind knew it, when, as part of a monsoon it came surging down the sides of the Himalayas, and the little red thread was white and growing on a lamb gamboling on the plains of Rajapontana.

The car stopped, and I came down from the sky: "What's the matter?"

"Look!" he said. "The Painted Desert!"

There was a filling station and a road-stand selling petrified wood, and a big northward-pointing sign saying: "The Painted Desert." We got out and looked. We had come to the rim of the mesa, and were able to see its red sides extend far out into the desert. The desert's floor reached to the horizon and was in spots laid over with green vegetation. From the fact that we were able to fill our minds with the sight in less than ten minutes, it might be concluded that, either there wasn't after all much to look at, or else that our education had provided us with no receptacle where such a sight might be distilled into an experience.

As we drove on, the surroundings crowded in on us, and we were able to see only a mile or less to each side: undulating tan earth sprinkled with cedars—the road following the trough of

the undulations—when a left turn and a couple of miles took us into the Government Reservation of the Petrified Forest.

The reservation is fenced off, and at the gate we were informed no one was allowed to carry out even the smallest piece of agate. The piece he had paid a dollar for in Gallup was marked by the guard to enable him to take it along on leaving the reservation. Hard by the entrance in conspicuous places, visitors had deposited the prettiest pieces they had found after carrying them as far as the law permitted. What visitors don't seem to realize is a service the government is rendering by preventing them from taking with them something that miraculously and inevitably turns into junk when they get it home. Furthermore, the government makes them experience a valuable emotion of resignation, and provides them with a memory of petrified forests with no junk to mar it.

Coming here and seeing the ground strewn with souvenirs—after all not too desirable—but with a penalty of up to five hundred dollars, or imprisonment not exceeding six months, or both, for appropriating any piece of any size whatsoever, and yet on the whole having it left to his sportsmanship not to take anything, the visitor is put in a frame of mind peculiar to the Petrified Forest.

Seeing then a piece of agate, and not a very marvellous piece at that, in a glass case in the museum in "Rainbow Forest," and an accompanying letter from a clergyman in India, saying that he took this piece during a visit and that his conscience bothered him and that he is hereby returning it, the visitor becomes perturbed with a strange wish also to experience these emotions of sin, repentance, confession, and redemption. He wants to emulate the clergyman and go on record as a forgiven sinner. I doubt if he does it, though. But he leaves the reservation an

experience the richer, and, if he reflects on his dreams, with a chastened mind.

On the day we were here, there were no other visitors. We drove through the reservation without seeing anybody. All about us was strewn the agate which has been national property since 1906. Before that time it was commercialized and reached the upper strata of western civilization as penholders, watch fobs, paperweights, or as absolute art: completely useless slabs, polished for the whatnots. As not enough of it left Arizona to satisfy the cravings for this fad among the masses, agate was being produced artificially and had a heyday like its cousin the burnt wood, until a government decree cut off the supply, and the genuine thing was no longer able to lend plausibility to the imitation. But while it lasted, everybody was supplied and satisfied according to his education.

A satisfaction of that kind permeating society should not be society's goal. Its goal should be a society in which the potentialities for awareness in everybody could be developed to their fullest possibilities.

Walking about in these fantastic settings among the millions of pieces of agate, some of them tree trunks over a hundred feet long, and every piece a delight to contemplate, the visitor tries to refer this to some previous experience, that he might get the full flavor of it. He has—among others—the choice between Arabian Nights and Andersen's Fairy Tales, for in the first case, it is like walking in a land Aladdin might have known, with precious stones strewn over the ground. The lack of people and the presence of a rumbling thunder cloud poking its head over the horizon, rounded off the illusion: a Djinn guarding the treasures, seeing you took nothing with you. The "tepees" were a strange sandstone formation which also served to relate the ex-

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perience to the East. This formation, caused by erosion, consisted of tall, slender cones, black on top and a light tan below. In the middle of the tepee the two colors merged as tenderly as the black and light tan of a donkey in a Persian miniature. Their looks endowed them with a mythological past.

A visiting geologist can react in a scientific and sensible manner. The rest of us must cut such capers as are determined by our capacity for dreaming and imagining. I was thinking of what Hans Andersen might have done with it: Some hundred and fifty million years ago a forest of big trees grew here, the biggest and the best the earth had ever raised. The earth was proud of it. But having as yet not evolved a consciousness to enjoy her produce in a way she thought it deserved, she packed the forest away and let the sea roll over the site, while with her chemistry she proceeded to embalm the tree trunks. When in the process of evolution there arose a race of people who thought the best was none too good for them, the earth pushed the burial place up to the surface and let wind and rain wash the dirt away. The so exposed treasures were promptly seized upon by the people, who proceeded to make knick-knacks of them, until we of our day saved them for democracy and for everybody to enjoy. At least that part of everybody who can afford to come out here and enjoy them.

The imagery, tapering off like a snake with a rattle on its tail, vanished, and as an alternative I began to see the "forest" in the broad and wholesome terms of post office symbolism: Arizona, a Nordic maiden in Greek garments, breaking through the earth crust and holding aloft to the sun a trayful of petrified forests which rain and rivers are washing clean and shiny.

We drove along route 66, and the changes in the landscape were abrupt and surprising. From undulating, tan earth pep-



*Mother Earth Laid Bare*  
[Oil]

ALEXANDRE HOGUE





*The Causeway*  
[Oil]

ARNOLD WILTZ

pered with cedars we suddenly found ourselves in a country as flat, green, and fat as Holland: cornfields and grazing cattle as far as the eye reached, which, towards the south, was where a long mesa extended in east-westerly direction as far as the eye reached. This "Holland" wasn't big, and our speed made it smaller yet. We shot out of it and into more undulating, tawny no-man's-land, when suddenly the road stood on end and lifted us into the grandest mountains ever.

Man has been acquainted with such landscape long enough to be able to do something about it in pictures, yet nothing has been done. The Bavarian Alps, which these mountains resemble, have been known longer than oil on canvas, and yet the pictures we see of them fail to stir us.

Not long ago I was talking to a painter about the mountains here and the big fir trees growing on them, and asked him why nobody painted them. I knew what he was going to answer—otherwise I wouldn't have asked him—but if I hadn't had a retort ready for his answer I shouldn't have waited for it.

"They can't be painted."

"Who told you so?" I asked.

He said, "Nobody has painted them."

I said, "I'll tell you why: it's because your French masters haven't invented symbols for them. Who taught you to make those guitar abstractions of yours? But even if your French teachers lived in Phoenix, Arizona, or in Colorado Springs, they would be too effete to tackle such landscape. They don't belong there. They are indoor still life abstractioneers. It takes a strong native to tackle such landscape. But the native painters have won their war of independence too recently for the Western landscape to be anything but *terra incognita* to them. Their frontier is as yet but a few miles to the west of the Frenchmen.

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Yet, some are tackling it—" and I told him of pioneers I had met.

Up and up we went to almost eight thousand feet. In places it looked as though a piece of the tawny hide of Texas had been draped over the hills. Here and there the road had been cut through the long, slender spurs of the mountains. These tan-colored spurs covered with sage had the shape of downward-reaching talons. The cut through them showed blood-red, which made you think the talons were alive, and that the piece below had been struck off with an axe.

Showers were falling from different black patches on the dome. In other places the dome was intensely blue. In still others it was shiny white with clouds. The many variations gave the impression that the sky belonged to different nations. Far out beneath the black clouds and above the wet earth, the red mesa seemed suspended. It was easier not to look, for then you didn't feel the obligation to dream spirits to match and to haunt these lands.—I thought again of that Devil's Mirror which shivered when reflecting beauty, and I felt like it. And I thought with apprehension of what might happen when it should reflect the Grand Canyon of which I had read.

Six miles from Flagstaff we took a right turn and drove some forty miles northward where at Cameron we turned left and arrived at sunset at the Canyon's southern rim.

From the bastion of the watchtower we looked northward into the deep bed of the Colorado River and up towards the part called Marble Canyon. Towards the east lay the plateau of the Painted Desert, unemphasized, and not meant to function in the composition of this particular evening. Deep below us among the terraced cones rearing themselves from the bottom, drifted white wisps of fog. In front of us and towards the west, black rain clouds were obscuring the north rim, but although

thunder and lightning were chasing through them, it wasn't raining. The storm was over, and the clouds were breaking up. The canyon was full of meteorological forces, subscribing to the laws of the great physicists, and now departing. Through holes in the black cumulus masses the setting sun threw shafts of light, and as if in resentment the bulbous cloud lit up from within and cursed with thunder. The clouds were moving eastward along the rim, and the piercing sunbeams ran over the canyon walls and over the rose-colored terraces of the zikkurats. They stood there, like priests at a sacrifice, believing in the rites, officiating with dignity. They had seen many such evenings, if the two specks on the bastion had not.

It seemed we had come here in time to watch the forces departing from a battle that was over. Judging from the properties that were being carried away, it must have been of Ragnarok dimensions. While the light yet lasted, we looked. As always after a big display, some unintended humor creeps in. Those straggling bits of white fog drifting in and out between the deep gorges below us didn't seem to know on what side of the struggle they belonged. One piece, particularly white, stood itself on end and rose vertically to the rim of the canyon, looked over it, and seated itself on the edge with its feet hanging down the abyss. I pointed it out to my companion: "See that cluck there—sitting on the rim, resting?" He seemed relieved to have something to laugh at.

The light waned, and I couldn't stay it, although I tried. The canyon was lost in darkness, and we were left to guess at the red abysses we had just seen.

We drove towards the lodge, noting as we drove where the road turned off towards vantage points, as we intended to come here on the morrow. We were in luck, it seemed. First we had

been shown a departing storm in sunset, and now, when we walked out to the rim by the hotel, we saw the dark crevasse in front of us under the full moon. The northern rim was a silhouette against the luminous sky. Somewhere over there a fire was burning. The sides of the southern rim were lit up by the moon for some distance down. What was below was darkness. We looked and we noted these things, and shook our heads. It was a painter's job, a poet's job—Sisyphus' job.

The Grand Canyon was first discovered by white men in 1540, when the Spaniard Cardenas came here in search of gold. Newberry, the geologist of the Ives expedition of 1857, was the first to describe it. The Powell expedition of 1869 sent out by the Smithsonian Institute to chart the canyon, had with it William H. Holmes "*to portray the chasm in hand-drawn panoramas of great beauty and marvelous accuracy, and Thomas Moran to paint its glories on canvas for the National Gallery of Art.*" (*The Grand Canyon of the Colorado River* by Francois E. Matthes, Topographer.)

On the other side of the sheet from which I got the above information was a topographical map of the canyon on which were given the names of the broad-based, terraced cones that lift their points almost to the edge of the canyon. Their names are only on the map. There are no signs on the formations themselves, and as there probably never will be, our appellations for them might be forgotten with many other things when our civilization crumbles. It won't matter a great deal, for the names are all taken from civilizations long since dead. None of the names will have any bearing on anything we loved or feared.

It is easy to imagine our proud fathers, the Victorians, standing on the rim here under fairly comfortable conditions, picking out names of bogey men of other days and climes and pinning

them to the mountains. One almost wishes Cardenas had brought a priest with him who could have named them after saints.

Buddha Temple	Solomon Temple	Walhalla Glades
Manu Temple	Menciu's Temple	Brahma Temple
Juno Temple	Vishnu Temple	Apollo Temple
Tower of Ra	Jupiter Temple	Horus Temple
Rahma Shrine	Sheba Temple	Diva Temple
Odin's Throne	Zoroaster Temple	Freya Castle
The Tabernacle	Shiva Temple	Tower of Seth
Confucius's Temple	Venus Temple	and
Krishna Shrine	Osiris Temple	Point Sublime
Thor's Temple		

These are, with the exception of our own hagiocracy, our utmost in superlatives. To compare with them I set down here some names which in the last few hundred years were given to places in another famous gorge, by men who were not enjoying themselves, and who, in the appellations found expression for a sentiment quite different from that which motivated the ladies and gentlemen who named the peaks in the Grand Canyon. And if you ask me which convey the deeper human experience with the earth, I'll say: "those from the Magellan Strait."

Useless Bay	Curious Peak	Famine Reach
Cape Up and Down	Mount Deception	Capstan Rock
Desolate Bay	Fury Head	Hole in the Wall
The Needle	Cape Deceit	Cape Horn

I woke myself up at 3 A.M., took my thermos bottle filled with coffee, and my pipe, a quilt, and a cushion, and set out for a place called Grand View from where to watch the sunrise. I have seen too many of them not to know what my clay needs while my soul is basking in the sunlight of the stratosphere.

I arrived and left the car in the parking grounds, and following first a road and then a path, came to a gap three feet wide,

but bottomless as far as I could judge by the light of my torch. Nevertheless, across it was a flat-topped pinnacle that would make a seat, and in front of which was nothing. With just enough speed to carry me and my pack over there and no further, I jumped, and having landed, made myself a seat, drank my coffee, and lit my pipe.

It was still dark. *Towards the east was but the faintest sign of the coming dawn.* I had read that line somewhere and thought it could be said no better.

There being nothing to look at as yet, I reverted to the book in which that line occurred, for in it were also my two favorite characters in fiction: one Clinton, cosmopolitan, eager, and in his reactions to people as yet half-baked—and the Englishman Harrold, sceptical, level-headed, and marked by the author for extinction. It was particularly their discourse on beauty I cared to recall this early morning on the rim of the Canyon. I had read it many times; I knew it by heart, and as I let it run through my head now, I subscribed to it again:

Clinton leaning back against the elm answered: "Sometimes I think laughter is vitally bound up with beauty."

"With beauty?" said Harrold doubtfully.

"Yes," said Clinton. "Laughter, in a way, is man's acknowledgement for beauty perceived. His 'Hail fellow!' to that which promotes life. Trees and animals are always laughing, until they are threatened with destruction—although I must admit vegetable life has a slow perception. A bunch of flowers die and rot with a smile on their faces. That's the reason we have to harden ourselves to throw them out." He pointed up into the elm: "This tree of yours is one big, green laughter. . . ."

Harrold said: "You are talking like a mystic now."

Clinton quieted: "A mystic?" he repeated resentfully. "Really, Harrold, I'd rather you called me a son-of-a-bitch."

"Beauty," said Harrold musingly. "But we laugh at hideous things as well."

"No we don't!" said Clinton sitting up. "A German chasing me with his

bayonet has his brains dashed out by a shell. I laugh, for to me that is beauty. It means life to me. It is only when I identify myself with his purpose, that I find his shattered head hideous. It is only when I take his viewpoint, the abandoned one hanging in the air where a moment ago hung he; then I see no beauty, and I stop laughing.

"You see," he went on, "what is beauty to the tiger is hideousness to the lamb—yet, somehow, I believe there must be an Absolute—a thing we can all laugh at in common, a thing we all will call beauty. What I mean is: although the arrows fly in different directions, they are all pointing at the same goal."

"In different directions and pointing to the same goal—how can they?" Harrold smiled. "And you don't want to be called a mystic!"

Clinton pursuing his thought wasn't listening. He tore a leaf out of his notebook: "Here, I can show it to you on paper; it's easy." With his pen he drew a circle on the page: "There. There's the circle, meaning the material universe. Now, all the arrows flying from the circumference towards the center, show by that direction matter's tendency, or its Will to conform to beauty, to attain beauty. On this side is the tiger, across from it is the lamb. Their arrows, that is their ideas of beauty, fly in opposite directions, but they both point to the same goal. There is no mysticism in that, is there?"

Harrold looked. "What do you propose is in the center?" he asked.

Clinton was puzzled. "In the center?" he repeated. "Darned if I know. Let's see." He was looking at his diagram. "Oh yes!—it's easy! You see, I thought it was a circle, but it isn't. It's a cylinder seen end-on. Of course! The arrows are parallel to one another on the inside of the cylinder. On my drawing they give the illusion of meeting in a center, but they never meet. There is no center, and only an illusion of a goal infinitely far away at the other end of the cylinder. The arrows are all flying in the same direction towards no goal. You might even say that the goal of life is to keep our individual arrows parallel to the axis of the cylinder, which is the direction all life goes. Beauty is the earmark of the tendency in the universal system, and when our sense of beauty perceives that tendency, we greet it with laughter, and if our sense of beauty can be said to have a purpose, it is to entice us to work along the grain of the System. We are confined, it seems, to this one-track appreciation of beauty: the direction following the Universal Will. Sort of distressing, don't you think—it prevents us from enjoying our own destruction."

Eager to make Harrold see his point he continued: "If an arrow diverts from its direction parallel to the axis, if it ceases going with the grain, it



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means its owner will be annihilated, for the direction of the grain is the will to survive, to express, to grow, and to conquer. The length of the axis must be Time," he mused. "Yes, the length of the axis is Time. Don't you think so?" he added pleadingly. "Don't you?"

Harrold didn't answer, and Clinton too sat silent for a while. "A cylinder?" he then resumed. "Yes, but it curves. It looks straight because we are so short-sighted, but it curves. It makes a spiral like a distiller's coil. That indicates the Will of the Universe travels in a circle without running back into itself. One kind of evolution takes place along the cylinder's axis, but will somebody tell me what happens along the axis of the coil—and whether that too curves." He laughed. "You would think God were showing me the works, Harrold. But He isn't. I'm showing them to myself."

The dome was lighting up. It wouldn't be long before the great display I was waiting for would begin. And while I waited I thought of Clinton's definition of beauty. Afraid to be thought a mystic, he had thought hard to be able to convey his ideas in terms that could be grasped by Harrold. I smiled to think of the author with his two dummies: one on each knee. One asking, and conditioning the answers, the other elucidating, and putting into his answers potential questions for further elucidations; striving hard to put himself across to his reader. Well, he had succeeded in my case.

From where I sat I couldn't see the sun rise, but I saw the dawn come gliding into the canyon. How did it come? Very quietly, inch by inch, timidly, and as if afraid to annoy Someone, who, turning over, had growled: "Let there be light, then."

Timidly the tops of the zikkurats were touched by the sun: the young girl dawn kissing the bald pates of the ancients, as gradually she let their night shadows glide towards the bottom. The canyon lay in the light as the newly created earth must have lain in the first chapter of Genesis before man was.

From the great stillness below me I heard a twitter. It was the fourth day. The birds were being created. Another bird

called, and through the clear air far below me flew one from one pine forest to another. Slowly it went the long distance that looked short to me. I was used to having birds fly fast the short distances above me.

By standing up on my gray pinnacle I could see westward down through the gorge where the terraces lay rose-colored in the new sun. Through their unique architecture they related themselves to an equally unique phantasmagoria, which, because no Edda- or Veda-writing peoples ever founded civilizations here, were never created.

A vast court the earth had built for a super-race of gods, but it had failed to place here an imagination to dream it. What would the Greeks have dreamt had they seen it for their Olympus? Or the Norsemen for their Valhalla? What would Homer have sung, or Erik the Red with his scald? Or the Psalmist, had he stood on the pinnacle where I stood watching the sunrise of this morning?

Each civilization to its humor—and what had we done with ours? We had divested the trees of dryads, and the seas of naiads, and our body of a winged soul. We had charted and photographed the canyon, and made it a mountain resort for exiled theocracies. We had disproved the Midgaards worm, and written

Memmon's song =  $\sqrt{\text{cosec } h' \cdot \text{cosec } p' \cdot \sin S \cdot \sin S - d'}$ ,  
and if we dared beguile a little conceit into the facts we had to say: "as if"—as if afraid to annoy someone.

I had sat on a fire escape in New York City once, watching the dawn come to the avenue. The red houses, when struck by the sun, I had seen as a shelf full of books about New York City, and as the dawn grew, their characters began coming out of them. They were easy to recognize; I knew them well from the

author who had written the books, and from my perch I felt at home among them.

In the sunset under the departing storm, the canyon had been like a folio of Doré's drawings. Under the moon and full of darkness, it had been a book for you to write in. In the light of a clear day it was a row of beautifully bound tomes on geology, majestically standing on their shelves, that he who studies may read.

As I jumped back over my little chasm I thought: symbols on canvas can't be made of the Grand Canyon—until somebody comes along and makes them.

Leaving this National Park we drove south through big national forests. We were sated with grandeur, and could react no more. Our top was down, and all around us, above and below us, were majestic hills with majestic trees growing on them. Looking, but unable to absorb, I was thinking of the Scholastics of Medieval times and their argument as to how many angels could stand on a needle's point. If I had had a conclave of Schoolmen in the car I should have asked them how they expected my faculties to enjoy the infinite glories of heaven for eternity, when I wasn't able to appreciate the limited ones of the earth for even a day.

I know perfectly well what they would have answered, and I should have had my retort ready: "But how would you expect those faculties of mine to fully appreciate such abysmal fires?"

I could have made a first class Schoolman myself. While they were thinking over the answer, I'd be telling them: "God could increase my capacity for suffering to a degree where I might appreciate the very highest temperature of His inferno." I see them nod their heads, and this could go on and on—but it is no

time for visiting with the Midgaards worm. . . . At Williams we made a right turn and soon found ourselves in a hot desert.

Above us was the usual desert sky: pitiless, wherefore up went our top. The flat earth was sandy and tawny with sparse vegetation here and there. In the distance lay brown and barren mountains, and in one place we saw the Colorado River canyon again—a glimpse of it, immense and other-worldly—as though a piece of some other kind of universe were going by.

It was a relief to be in the desert after the copiousness of the national forests. From the straight and excellent road over which we were doing a smooth 70 with one hand on the wheel, we saw mountain ranges to the east called Cerbats. A side road led into the foothills where lay a mining town called Chloride, and this was the only evidence of humor we saw for upwards of a hundred miles.

In Arizona we didn't encounter many native people. Most of those we saw were visitors from other states like ourselves. But from the few Arizonans we did see, I judged they were no different from the rest of us, and that—like us—they could be solved by the simple formula: M.o.V.iii.1.S. Where S stands for Shylock: “. . . *if you tickle us, do we not laugh?* . . .”

I was fortunate enough to be able to tickle one, and he laughed: Coming along the road we saw a truck hauled off to one side, with the driver standing by waving us to stop. Suspecting a hold-up, but feeling somewhat reassured by his Arizona license, we stopped and were told how he had tried to reach a filling station beyond the desert to be able to buy cheaper gas, but his tank had run dry, and would we, please, lift him to the nearest station that he might buy a gallon? We'd do better than that. In the back we had a canful, bought in New Jersey during a gas war: Essolene, 13 cents a gallon. The top had rusted and

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he had to puncture it to get it started, and although we weren't able to give him the drink of water he asked for we had made a friend in Arizona.

We passed some vast caves on the walls of which—like mud wasp nests in an empty barrel—hung the presumably abandoned homes of the cliff-dwellers. As I visualized these people, I saw them drinking. Everything in these lands could do with a drink. Beyond the mountains lay Red Lake marked "dry" on the map.

Suddenly, and without any warning, we arrived at Boulder Dam and brought the car to a stop. The air was clear and every detail of the surroundings stood out. The sky above the brown mountains was incredibly blue, with incredibly white bits of cloud. The mountain sides came straight down into the green, transparent lake. The lake snaked itself around the feet of the mountains. You saw the mountains' feet jut into it, one beyond the other as the perspective went off. A white motor boat came around the bend. You looked down at it; the lake has still a great many feet to rise. Approaching the lake in curves, and running over the dam, went the black-topped road, immaculate with its white center-line. The dam and the four intake towers, as also the sleek, stream-lined spillways, were of an ivory-colored cement. The daring curves of the road and structures gave the impression of an earth-defying, self-confident intelligence with which the twentieth-century visitor fain would identify himself.

We sat and looked at it from the stopped car. There wasn't a thing one could wish to have changed. The natural ruggedness of the mountains and the smooth efficiency of man's work were here coördinated into one large harmony.

The painter Arnold Wiltz died before he had done his best work. Yet from the canvases he has left behind, I selected him

when I imaginatively appointed an artist to paint the scene. It is my contention that through the symbols he would have created, anyone coming here would have been able to "see" this scene as I saw it, interpreted through the picture I know he would have made of it. That he was my friend might to some extent invalidate my contention, but I'll ask you to give him the benefit of your doubt, more so because, unfortunately, none of it is either here or there.

We bought tickets to a descent into the dam. I wanted to understand the functioning of this great project, and when, with a dozen more tourists, we were taken in hand by an official guide, I kept close to him to hear all he had to say. Coming out of the elevator we turned a corner and stood in an enormous room, where I gave up the idea of learning the functioning, for speculating on the aesthetics of what I saw. I could see this huge white hall with its red and black dynamos only as a functional twentieth-century cathedral. It was built with as much zeal and reverence, from as dire a need, and was as much part of the *zeitgeist* as any cathedral built in the Middle Ages. The guide went to a microphone, and over the loudspeaker came his message of Good Will to Man: improved standard of living; hope of redeeming bad lands; uncounted horsepower for unborn generations in as yet unbuilt cities.

Everything one looked at was beautiful, because it functioned 100 per cent to the purpose for which it was made. The colors selected for painting the various parts—red lead, a rare green, yellows—made themselves evident rather as big harmonies filling the spaces under the high ceilings. The adjectives coming to mind were, vast, efficient, bright, hard, huge, clean, smooth, useful. There were no murals painted where enormous murals could go—and you can meditate your own meditations

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on that, without any cue from me. The only decorations I saw were some large mosaics laid into the floors of the corridors. With taste and tact, whosoever was responsible for decorations being here, had made them Indian symbols from the blankets and the pottery.

The guide took us out of doors behind the dam and at the foot of it. In front and below us was the Colorado River as it had been tamed by going through the pipes and tunnels of the dam, and had had some of its horsepower taken out of it. It seemed resentful, and was bubbling and running this way and that in eddies, until it found its course down the canyon. Some 130 miles further it is again tapped for strength at Parker Dam.

I asked the guide a great many questions, and apologized for doing so, telling him what I was after, and what I was doing with my time and my money. He didn't mind my questions, and told me that as soon as he had taken the other lot up the elevator, he'd come back for me and show me everything there was to see.

My companion and I waited. "What are we waiting for?" he asked. I told him. I told him that he and I were going to be shown everything and have everything explained to us—incidentally using the occasion to instill a little respect for myself.

We were introduced to the chief engineer, and we were taken places tourists generally are not made acquainted with. On hearing the water of the Colorado River was being cleaned of its silt in front of the dam, I asked how they prevented the silt from accumulating there. On being told it hardened and could not be removed, I asked how long it would be before the accumulated silt would make the dam useless. As far as I recall I was told: five hundred years. Whatever else I was told can

also be read in the pamphlet, *Boulder Dam*, got out by the Department of the Interior.

The engineer, on hearing I was collecting notes for a book on art, told me not to miss the two bas-reliefs above the entrance doors. Somebody had said their sculptor was greater than Borglum. I hadn't seen them when I entered, and as I thought of decorations for the large smooth planes out in the sun, I mixed my impressions of the Indian symbols in mosaic with my recollections of Egyptian relief work over large surfaces, and hoped for something I couldn't imagine.

I looked at the reliefs when I came outside. They were symbols of the functionings of the dam: flood control, navigation, power production, irrigation, etc. etc.—not Egyptian, certainly, nor Indian, but excessively broad in appeal. "Their maker should have one of the biggest audiences in the country," I said to the guide as we parted.

The guide had told us of Lake Mead and the public camping and picnic grounds and given us directions for how to get there. After a swim we drove to Boulder City, Nevada, and got an air-conditioned tourist cabin. The way they condition, i.e. cool, the air is to have a fan blow it through a wire-mesh box filled with excelsior, over which water constantly trickles. The box is placed in the window, and is so effective that although it was hot as the desert outside, we had to shut off the fan.





WE CUT off the little triangle of Nevada to the south and arrived in California where, with allowances for all I had heard from these parts, I had not expected to encounter a desert as extensive and dry as the one over which sprawls in blue letters the name: San Bernardino. "Cinder Cone, Dry Lake, Coyote Well, Borax Well, Casa Desierta, Harvard, and the Devil's Playground" are some of this saint's properties, and to the north of him lies Death Valley. If you look at a topographical map of this country, you'll see how the quaint San Bernardino legend arose. It is told that when the saint called to see the spot named for him in California, he made a rush westward to get out of it, so violent that he bent the ranges of the Rockies towards the Pacific and made what is now the Mojave Desert. Otherwise there is nothing in my books about San Bernardino, except that in Carl Zigrosser's *Six Centuries of Fine Prints* it is stated that The Master of Balaam drew his portrait in the fifteenth century.

The desert is paintable. A school of desert painters could find it easily a reason for being. But that is all they would find. Bernardino made no provision for art in his domain, but from a car you can take some grand snapshots of the scenery.



*Land, Sea, and Fog*  
[Water color]

STANDISH BACKUS, JR.



*Dakota Bad Lands*  
[Oil]

ARNOLD BLANCH

We struck the mountains again and before we knew it were back in civilization. Regarding size, things are great in California—and presently we found ourselves in the midst of the most resplendent citrus groves and road sign advertising. The thing now was to find our way to Los Angeles and get our mail, and having got it, to find our way out again. I have never driven in a more irresponsible traffic. Los Angeles is big and sprawling, because, they tell me, in case of an earthquake less damage ensues from low houses than from high ones.

Along Ocean Highway we drove towards Santa Barbara. High mountains to the right and the Pacific to the left. An excellent road and grand scenery from an open car, but how people cooped up in a closed one can enjoy it, I don't see. At that we were unable to enjoy it. The traffic was too thick. The traffic was terrific, and a feature to make it more so were enormous diesel trucks with a van as big as the truck for a trailer. The exhaust from a diesel truck goes out through a vertical pipe, and is a gray smoke turning to black on steep grades. It seems to be heavier than ordinary exhaust gas, for you can smell a diesel truck ten miles before you overtake it.

I wasn't driving, but it was seldom I had the peace of mind to take my eyes off the road and look at the Pacific Ocean, which I hadn't seen since 1920. It seemed to have got older and, I thought, subdued. From certain places we could see its incoming rollers crash against the beach. Their foam wasn't white, though. It looked as if it had oil in it. The horizon was misty, and we could barely see the Saints Rose and Cruz, which are some of the Capris along this coast.

The Ocean Highway and the scenery to both sides is one of California's gifts to the American tourists, and the tourists are taking advantage of it. The tourist, they tell me, is one of Cali-

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fornia's sources of revenue, and oil, they say, is another. In one place along this drive the two can nod to each other: oil has been discovered on the beach. There was a whole little colony reminding of Oklahoma City outskirts with oil towers far out into the water.

It would have been next to impossible to make a right-hand turn into any property off the road. It was utterly impossible to make a left across the oncoming traffic. As our Woodstock friends, the Reasoners, lived on the left side in Montecito, we had to drive to Santa Barbara to get on the side from where, by slowing down the traffic, we could make the sharp turn that took us into their garden.

We spent the night with this cheerful family consisting of six artists: parents and four children—Abbot Thayer's grandchildren—and each member hanging his and her work where they could find room for it, which practice gave a unique and joyful appearance to the various rooms. A son, seventeen years old, interested in aviation and in charge of a broadcast—*In the Air on the Air* on station KTMS in Santa Barbara—immediately started planning an interview over the radio with my companion: "What is the East Doing About Model Airplane Building?" And I heard my charge suggest they put in a proposal to the Government that the youth of the country be given free flying instruction without in any way obliging it to fight in case of war. I thought humbly: put that in your pipe, Uncle Sam.

Behind the Reasoner garden ran the streamlined Southern Pacific. In front of the garden ran the diesel trucks. When either or both went by, conversation was suspended, and your correspondent longed for the peace and quiet of Third Avenue, New York City.

Next morning we all went down to have a dip in the Pacific Ocean.

If you drop a globule of oil on water, the molecules of the former will abandon the globular formation for one of the thinnest formations known to matter in the universe: that of a sheet one molecule thick. One of the peculiarities of this sheet is that it splits the sunlight into spectra—as do the feathers of a starling—but it is more apt to remind you of a cesspool or the floor of a garage. It breaks if you take a header into it, but no sooner are you under water than it pulls itself together on the surface. You have to break it once more to get air. When you emerge from the water, it wraps itself around you, and you can smell it on your bathing suit and see it on your towel.

The ocean is rather chilly along this coast, but if you put on an overcoat and sit in the sun, you'll be sitting on the sunny shores of California—and, if you are so inclined, dream of the Gulf Stream and of Nantucket Island.

One of the reasons for the heavy traffic on Ocean Highway was the yearly four-day Santa Barbara Festival which was commencing on the morrow. "Sorry I can't stay for it, Dave," I said to my host. I was leaving my companion here, and going back to Los Angeles. In the art column of a paper I had read: ". . . *the growing importance of California as an art center is almost phenomenal,*" and as the paper was from Los Angeles, I thought the phenomenon might be studied to advantage in that center.

"If that isn't just like you," said Dave. "Here all America is striving to get to this famous festival, and when you by luck more than brains arrive just in time for it, you don't want to see it!" As eloquently he advanced his reasons why I should stay, I

realized that had I lived out here for a year, I too should want a human being to talk to. I stayed.

I recall when reading *Main Street* my acute embarrassment at Sinclair Lewis' description of a parade down that street. As when reading certain passages in Dostoevski's *The Idiot* I had to lay the book down. It touched me too much on the raw. Analyzing those pages in *Main Street* to see what made them so scathing to that innocuous parade, I saw it was described—or dissected—in a perfectly sober and non-enthusiastic language. Something we had never heard spoken of except in the booster language common up to 1929 was here being reported in cold, almost scientific terms.

Because a parade—even the comparatively colorless one of Gopher Prairie—has been thus accounted for, I shall refrain from attempting anything like it here. Furthermore, why can't "these, my little ones" have their fun in peace? There was Senator McAdoo dressed like a cowboy in a saddle—said the man with the amplifier—worth seven thousand dollars. The horse he rode was beautiful. The horses were all beautiful, and the dressed-up riders showed them off to advantage. Some of the riders themselves were beautiful.

Having asked my host to show me the different types of people who came to this festival, he took me to a swanky joint where we had a very expensive glass of beer. The visitors I saw here were of a type different from the one that comes to look at the Grand Canyon. In describing them, I don't think I can do better than to say they looked like ads in the *New Yorker*—but you had only to screw your face into a vestige of a smile to see them as the cartoons of that same publication. Stray bits of conversation I heard made perfect captions for the pictures; a

smart man with a pencil and a pad could have found twenty dollars' worth wherever he turned.

We went to see the Santa Barbara city hall. Things are consistent in California, and in using the name "California" I refer to that which so far I had seen to the west of the Rockies and along route 101. The city hall reminded me of a restaurant on Fifth Avenue done in Spanish Mission, and with the details of tiles and wrought iron and other decorations carried somewhat further than the padres had them. The plaster on the walls suggested embossed leather, and the gilt suggested gift shops. You missed a parrot calling: "Pieces of Eight!" and you could have wished the attendants had been dressed like Captain Kidd with a patch over one eye. In the big hall were some large murals showing early California history, and never, up until then, had I seen murals harmonizing so well with their surroundings as did these.

But the visitors coming here to look at them did so reverently and with admiration. Judging from their expressions, facial and oral, they were finding in these surroundings that for which they were reaching out. They had taken this trip to grow, and were growing, and were conscious of growing, as over against the sophisticates in the expensive restaurant, who—along different lines—had attained to the growth of which they were capable. For that reason I declare any disparaging remarks I have made about the city hall to be without value. Its style and peculiar beauty serves its purpose in Southern California, which is like the kindergarten of the nation.

We came into the public library which adjoins the Faulkner Memorial Gallery. Santa Barbara has besides two commercial galleries, one of which sustains itself selling modern Americans.



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An oil and water color show by California artists was on in the Faulkner Gallery, and I noted, with some pleasure, that the best pictures had been given the best places. That doesn't mean there was anything absolute about the "best." It only means that I felt related to the intelligence responsible for the hanging—and it is always pleasant to run across one's intelligent relatives. A couple of the painters were nationally known, among them Millard Sheets. Another, Standish Backus, will soon be. Most of these painters, to my mind, had got into the pictures some of that which differentiates California from the rest of the country. If you ask me what that might be, I doubt I can come nearer to it than, "It is solving a problem through an intuition based on a wish rather than on anything factual"—but I can tell from the weak imprint my pencil makes of those words, that no very strong conviction is pressing it against the paper.

We went into the streets again. They were decorated with streamers, flags, and bunting, but not enough of it to compete with a similar display I saw in Munich in 1933, when Hitler laid the cornerstone for the new Glaspalatz. The parade itself, however, and the carefree behavior of the crowds, and the lack of military and police supervision, bore witness to a spirit than which none higher sat in the world today. Booths with Indian and Mexican work were spread over the fairgrounds, with fortunetellers and Punch and Judy theaters. Chains of people went singing through the streets, and in the evening the crowds danced in the open to music from little orchestras on elevated stands. Fat young business men dancing with Mexican girls, and near us a group of American girls were being asked to dance by some handsome young Mexicans. The girls demurred, and finally danced with each other.

It was a colorful and gay activity I wished Pascin could have

seen and sketched. It was carnival, and people were dressed in Spanish and Mexican costumes—and having seen it in bloom here in the streets, I suggested we go and see what it looked like in the expensive restaurant.

Every seat was taken. We could get no further than the outlying portico, but what we saw was a de luxe edition of the *New Yorker* in several colors. I found it hard to tear myself away. A dowager in black mantilla and with a fan on which were painted Goya reproductions in miniature, arrived with her party and asked the manager about her reservations. Well, it seemed that something had miscarried and that there was no more room. The manager was full of regrets and very sorry. But he wasn't half as sorry as the dowager and I, and the gay music wafted out to us was no accompaniment to our emotions. Being naturally soft-hearted my first impulse is to identify myself with misfortune, and it is only when thus identified that my defense mechanism awakens me to the humor of the situation. Then, of course, I withdraw.

From the Dutchman's whither we went, we intended to drive home, but were sidetracked by a concert in progress behind the city hall. It looked magnificent! Walter Winchell would have called it "Californiferous." What wouldn't the Athenians have thought of the Greek theater laid out here, with the audience by the thousands sitting on the grassy slopes? Through a microphone on the stage a Santa Barbara matron in red evening gown was addressing the throng. When she had said all she could think of saying, she paused and thought of something more to say. It was exciting to hear her drivel demoniacally bassooned into the night on the amplifier's voice of doom. The Athenians, not understanding the language, would have fallen on their faces and worshipped her. The stage was light flooded, and if

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they couldn't have heard her, they could have seen her. A piano and a violin proceeded to put an anticlimax to the performance, and we went home.

I drove back to Los Angeles. California to the left and below me, the universe to the right and above me, but I was giving my attention to that of both which was ahead of me: the road and empty space—the latter being for a long time occupied by a piece of matter from Nevada, a diesel truck I could not squeeze ahead of.

I arrived, and while I waited for the car to be washed and have its oil changed, I read the local paper in which the European war scare seemed to grow gorgeously Californian, and bigger than anywhere else in the country.

Among the people in Los Angeles, those who are connected with the moving picture industry are particularly wary of unknown callers bringing greetings from the folks back home. I had no suspicion of this when I called on Mrs. Kenneth MacGown in West Los Angeles to bring her a greeting from her artist sister in New York, and I wasn't at all surprised when the maid let me into the garden where the lady was arranging zinnias in a tall vase: a Manet figure in a Renoir setting; and I was flattered, but not taken aback, when, pronouncing my name correctly, she greeted me and bade me welcome.

It was not until later I learned of people's timidity of job-hunters out here, and that this very day she had had a letter from her sister saying I might call. She said: "While you are in Los Angeles, you stay with us. Only let me know if you won't be home for dinner."

It was a good place to stay. The house lay in a neighborhood where trees and hedges obscured houses, and where cars came

only on business. On the walls of this home were good pictures, French and Americans. On the floor were good rugs. On the shelves were good books, and on the table was good food. The master had good liquor and good cigars, and the seventeen-year-old son was a good talker and not a bad listener and interested in aviation, and everybody was easy to talk to on any subject whatever.

From here I made sallies into hot Los Angeles, where, among other things I saw some paintings by the Frenchman Jean Charlot in which he had fused Aztec art with modern French in a most fascinating manner. These pictures were interesting to look at, but I am not prepared to say that that alone qualifies them to the esteem of an informed intelligence, to the approval of a mind cognizant with the art expressions of the cultures past and present—but if I meet such a one, I shall ask it. If, as has been said, *"painting is the pictorial expression of that which a civilization apprehends through its reason, imagination, and perception,"* and which I, for one, like to believe it is, I don't see how a Frenchman crossing himself with dead Aztec can hope to express anything not half-horse, half-alligator. But perhaps art is not that. Perhaps art is simply the laws of the system rendered symbolically through human awareness and intuition, irrespective of culture, time, and influences.

I returned from the city sooner than I had expected to, and was back in the cool, quiet neighborhood where I was visiting. Nobody was home but the young son.—There is nothing on earth that flatters me more than to be treated as an equal by a seventeen-yearling. It proves to me that I am perceptible in a universe seventeen years old—and such a one shines.

Having come upstairs and seen his door open and him lying on his bed reading a copy of *Famous Funnies*, I went in and

asked him if he had a copy he could lend me—implying with my tone that I'd take the one he was reading, if he hadn't.

I know that publication well. A member of my own family is always buying it, and when through with it turning it over to me, that I might see what my favorites, "The Bungles," are doing.

Did this young man get up from his bed, saying: "I'm sorry, Sir, but I haven't—but won't you please take the one I am reading?" And to make it easier for me: "I have to study my algebra."

No, he didn't do anything of the kind. He shook his head, and without giving too much attention to the matter pulled a *Flying Aces* out from under himself, saying: "You can look at this."

When I went to bed that night, I found the *Famous Funnies* lying on my pillow, and when I told his mother about it at breakfast, she said: "He must think a lot of you to do that." I had furthermore had a long talk with him about aviation in California, as I wanted to be primed and equal to the two I had to encounter on my return to Montecito.

When I asked my hostess where and how I could contact local artists, she said, "I don't know where you'll find any around here"; yet she found one: a young man with courage and appetite for life, and an initiative that made him go and get what he was after. Already he had put out a book of lead pencil portraits of well-known and famous Americans whom he had asked for an interview, and in which book, aside from the pencil portraits, he had let each sitter draw a word portrait of himself in a few sentences. I found him enjoyable company. An able and facile artist under good influences. An idealist with both feet on the

ground, and an eye cocked to windward. A studio in New York, and one in Los Angeles, and commuting between the two in an open Chevy runabout. Sketching in pencil as he drove cross country, making color notes in writing, and taking snapshots for details. Working up the finished water color—so far his only medium—in either of his studios, and exhibiting and selling his work all over the country. He had a show of excellent water colors at the Stendahl Galleries in Los Angeles, and a picture of his I saw there, *Colorado Springs*, determined me not to miss that place. He had made a broadcast over a Los Angeles station and was receiving fan mail on that account, and the *Hollywood Citizen News* carried, besides an interview, a reproduction of one of his works.

Through history the pattern of Europe has changed many times, and after each cataclysmal change Europe has emerged stronger than ever. These changes are no longer limited to Europe; the whole world changes. The old order I was used to is vanishing, and with it is disappearing one of its choicest products: the individual's freedom to take advantage of modern means of communication to go and come all over the world. To say, to write, and to paint what he likes wherever he is, and, if good enough, to be able to make a living doing so. The earth is due for an era of regimentation and state supervision. Until the new order is taken for granted as the old one was, the individual will be restricted in his moves, limited in his expression.

The account I have given above of a travelling painter is to show how in this country, as compared to others, an artist may yet be footfree and able to make a living expressing his joy in anything as detached from national religion as the country's landscape. Considering the trend of the times, however, I recom-

mend that a writer in search of a likely hero, gather in this man, that his type may go on record with those of other vanishing Americans. His name is George Schreiber.

I attended a dinner where I met a moving picture producer with whom I exchanged some ideas upon the weather, and to whom I told I had a manuscript, which, if published, the industry might find it profitable to make into a picture. In that case, I said, I should like to come out here and help direct the production, as I had some ideas that had never been tried in the movies, and which, if handled properly, might inaugurate a new film era.

He said: "We don't want you! We are lying awake nights trying to think how to keep new ideas out of the movies. Television gives us nightmares!"

I have reproduced his words as faithfully as the alphabet and typography permit me. What I cannot reproduce is the almost mystical horror he evinced when saying, "new ideas." I felt an apology was due him for my having mentioned anything as anathematized. Later, in order to understand this attitude, I submitted for evaluation to my critical faculties the following suggestion: the movie trust is at present getting as big a percentage of the country's earnings as it can ever hope to get, wherefore it has no incentive whatever to enhance its product—particularly not along lines leading uphill.

Over my cocktail I listened fascinated to a lady telling me of her collection. Of all the items she enumerated I had never had the good fortune to encounter one, although I often had heard them spoken of. She didn't call it that, but she collected memories of encounters with famous people and mentioned Windsor, Eden, Shaw, etc. A lady near by cried to us that she had been kicked over the shins by Windsor in a nightclub. Shaw

anecdotes were being told. To hold my own I had to dress up a story from the fo'c'stle and refer it to Mr. Shaw—and the world was a Shaw anecdote the richer.

I encountered also a lady whose son of twelve wanted to become an artist, and—said the mother—who drew the loveliest pictures. Asking her how he rendered his subject, I was told: "Very representational. And I am glad of it," she added. "I am frightened by this modern work."

I told her not to take it to heart, if, after a while, her boy should show signs of abandoning the representational phase of his development for one more in keeping with his time. I advised her against discouraging it.

The lady looked worried and asked if this were inevitable. I said it was not improbable.

Seemingly impatient with her lack of understanding, she asked me to explain how I could see anything in this crazy modern work.

On a table was lying a book on Marin with reproductions of his pictures. I had looked at it earlier, admitting to myself that Marin was a phenomenon which I could not see eye to eye with Stieglitz. I now picked it up and opened it on a color reproduction of a three-masted schooner: "Take this ship," I said. "Don't you like that?"

"No," she said. "I think it is horrible."

"What's the matter with it?"

"Where are the details?" she asked. "When I look at a picture of a ship, I want to be able to enjoy the details. The sails in that all run together, and where are the ropes?"

I told her next time she saw a picture of a ship to her liking, to look at it through a magnifying glass and discover that all her fine details were but streaks and smears of paint. I told her



the degree to which representation could be carried was limited by the medium, and that if art were to mean anything at all, we should try to follow the artist and not demand he cater to our ideas as to what a picture should be. Marin, in this picture, had set the limit for representation where he found it conveyed his emotional impression of a schooner standing off through green seas.

The lady looked again: "Do you like this man's work?"

"I am not a Marin fan," I said. "I prefer less personality and more representation in pictures. I think a man who can make beautifully a representation that conveys his emotion to a multitude, is more important as a cultural influence than one who can get the same amount of beauty into his canvas only by abstracting his subject beyond the ability of all but a few to see it. Such a man might discover new symbols, and give you more intellectual pleasure—but to quote Conrad: *'The artist appeals to that part of our being which is not dependent upon wisdom; to that in us which is a gift and not an acquisition and therefore more permanently enduring.'*"

Pointing to the picture she said: "But you just said this abstraction was beautiful."

"It is. But a painting, which in addition to being beautiful, relates itself to the untutored onlooker's experience, has, to my mind, a higher cultural value than a work made for a small elite—in the same way that prize-fighting is of greater cultural value to society than piano lessons, because it teaches a far larger public respect for rules, ethics, and sportsmanship—values which later might be recognized in other, higher realms. Art is an instrument of the emotions, and not, as art criticism, of the intellect. I very much doubt Marin could make a faithful representation as beautiful as his abstraction here."

The lady asked with emphasis: "Which is your favorite school of painting?" And to make it clearer to me what she wanted to know, added: "Whom shall one believe? I have read several modern books on painting"—she mentioned their authors—"which one is right?"

I was in difficulties here. "Which one is right? Your native predilection, I'd say. I know of no absolute standard by which a picture may be judged good or bad, except the onlooker's personal sense of beauty. This sense should be as natural to an individual as his sense of balance, but it is seldom the criterion it should be, because it is confused with taste, which is a matter of environment and breeding—hence making its owner uncertain of its manifestations."

"Taste?" she asked speculatively.

"Taste, I dare say, is the sense of beauty of superficialities: fashions and styles, as over against appreciation of the fundamental laws that keep the earth revolving about the sun, and the horse from running away when the stable is closed. I can't recommend any one school of painting, or any one viewpoint of art. Within my limitations I am on the lookout for evidence of the fundamental laws when I look at pictures. I have a better chance of finding it, if I look subconsciously."

From Montecito looking towards the heights, one sees what appears to be big avenues running over the mountains. They are swathes cut by the forest service to curtail fires. Inquiring, I learned that the primary object of Santa Barbara National Forest is not to provide the public with a picnic ground, nor yet to save the trees for future generations, but to secure a watershed by guarding the countryside against erosion resulting from indiscriminate cutting. "*The forest is primarily a watershed pro-*

tection forest, and the water resources . . . have by far the greatest value of any resources the forest contains." (U.S. Department of Agriculture Bulletin.) I was surprised to learn this, as I had been to learn that selling "falling water" to the power companies was a mere incidental in the T.V.A. and Boulder Dam projects.

The views from the road rearing and snaking itself into the mountains were more than I had faculties for enjoying: one after another the most magnificent vistas threw themselves open to the traveller; and as I stand here on my trip through the *Landscape with Blooming Tree*, on which trip afterthought is forethought, I reflect on certain passages in *A Southerner Discovers the South*, where Mr. Daniels objects to admission being charged to places from which there is a view. And I think of *Stella*, the nude shown in the San Francisco 1915 Worlds Fair. Had that painting been hung in the Palace of Fine Arts where there was no charge for looking, I doubt if we, the public, should have paid much attention to her. But we had to pay ten cents to feast our eyes, and I have it from reliable observers that more people went to see that picture than went to see any other one picture in the exposition—from which I conclude, Mr. Daniels, that if you wish to have the public really enjoy a sight, you have to charge it for looking.

Since we had come on the strip of land that lies between the Rockies and the sea, our mornings had been foggy, and in planning our trip northward I might have taken that into account, had not the fog risen before I was ever able to get my companion out of bed. Because I had been admonished to see he got plenty of sleep, I did my writing during the morning hours, wherefore considerations of fog could be eliminated; we

stayed on the shore route as we drove towards San Francisco.

Adjectives soon cease to signify in California. I felt this as from my perch on the folded top I contemplated the views all around me. These scenes wanted to be sung, or painted, or danced, or embodied in music—expressed in some one of the arts. They pressed themselves on the observer wherever he turned—made him feel like an insignificant little table through which a thousand spirits were trying to tap their messages all at once.

In considering what surroundings like these might come to mean to a well adjusted society: might they not develop an architecture, and an art, and a general behavior to match? It seemed to me, as alternately I was exposed to inland valleys and to the dark Pacific crashing white against the rocks below, that this landscape might evolve minds comparable to the beings Puvis de Chavannes puts into his canvases, and Arthur B. Davies puts into his.

I was far from being one such myself. My reactions to the surroundings were more those of a moving picture camera registering form and color on a strip of celluloid: brown mountains sloping down towards us with ravines and huge spurs velvety in texture. Bits of clouds lying on them. Azure patches of sky. And to the other side: the sea. I could almost hear the whirr of my recording machine as I turned my eyes from sky to shore to sea and back to sky again.

I began to pick out subjects for those of my friends who have a camera; places where they could put up their tripods; places where they could park their cars. From that viewpoint it was as if the road had been built for photographers. (This paragraph went through my mind predicated by the word *painters*, but when I tried to visualize their product, I had no experience

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to back up my imagination, and could see only travel posters. I then substituted *photographers*.)

We drove into Carmel and out again. I had seen a colored movie from Carmel taken by a colored movie and Carmel enthusiast. It had looked like an advertisement for the place, and what I saw from the car reminded me of the movie. I recall that when the reel had been shown, its owner ran it off once more to get it back on its original spool, thereby reversing the time element. This caused the incoming Pacific waves to behave in an astounding manner: they reared backwards and drew themselves away, as if in horror, from the beach of Carmel.

Through rounded hills waxing into mountains, we drove inland to the sequoia forests. This time of year the hills are covered with yellow grass. In the sun it looked golden, and it is dotted with clumps of oaks or single trees. White-headed Hereford cattle graze here and there, although at times the flocks are large.

We came into valleys full of tall pines, each tree a thing to look at. At times the yellow hills rolled themselves into a vista—and then we arrived at the first group of giant trees. We had approached them along a road where the trees grew bigger than any I had ever seen, as if to prepare us for the sequoias.

Well, we saw them. We looked up at them, and walked around them, and found there was nothing else on earth like them.

We hired a guide, and from the facts he gave us, I found it hard not to conclude these trees were the habitat of a very aristocratic notion, imprisoned in them as the genii under Solomon's seal.

I had a strong feeling that the hour as perceived by man would make a good minute for the sequoias—and setting man's

age at fifty and that of the trees at three thousand years, this worked out to the second. They stand here, subject to death from us, but they die like aristocrats, without sharing their thoughts with us.

The government—itself of an age one hundred and sixty, and with hopes of growing to at least three thousand—has out of fellow-feeling for the trees forbidden visitors to carve their names in them. The trees themselves wouldn't mind. They secrete a new growth to heal any damage done them. One tree is shown, within the hollowness of which an officer commanding U.S. soldiery long ago had his quarters. The places where he had cut his windows are shown, and the place where the smoke was drafted out of his fire, but all have been filled in by the tree itself. In this respect the tree is like a poem of which lines have been lost, but in which the quality of the poem itself will suggest second growths to the reader.

A place was indicated to us where a sequoia had sent out a branch sideways, to counteract the destruction of its top by lightning. From this side shoot a new top had grown, while downward had grown a support to prevent it from breaking off. *And in case the downward-growing support should not reach the earth in time to be of help, the tree had sent up a shoot from the earth to meet it!!!* When creation grows as big and majestic as these sequoias, one likes to believe such things about it. The guide showed us where the downward-growing and upward-growing supports had met, and the tree's intention. It all looked too beautiful not to be believed: struck by lightning, the tree idea had taken a step sideways and was standing there expressed in a new growth by its old stump.

Owing to an acid in their sap, the sequoias are not attacked by other diseases than us, and owing to a large percentage of water,

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they survive fires that kill all other life around them. A special providence seems to be looking after them, and maybe our sense of beauty has been given us that they might survive.

Not being able to cut our initials in them, some of us have written our names on slips of paper and pinned them up inside the cavity of one of the largest trees. The cavity is full of such slips. In other places, man in societies has procured permission to dedicate a tree to his lodge or chapter by putting a bronze plaque on it. One read: "*Dedicated August 6th, 1922, to the Order of Amaranth by the Past Royal Matrons and Patrons. . . .*"

The guide we had was a quiet old man, weatherbeaten and sinewy. He spoke to the point about the trees and the forest until our party of three was joined by four more people. Then, as I suppose it ought to, his attitude changed and took on the color of the aggregate, and we began having some fun: he repeated all the puns and jokes he had gathered about the trees during a long life of guiding.

I first thought the four newcomers were Orientals belonging to some mystic California cult or other, but I was fooled by anti-kink, rouge, and pink powder. I was fooled by bulging forms in green beach-pyjamas peppered with purple half-moons and stars, by turbans and high-heeled slippers from which peeped carmine-colored toenails. The newcomers were a Baptist minister with three of his congregation come to see the big trees. They were friendly and congenial people to be with, and when one of the three "Sisters" expressed curiosity as to what the tops of the sequoias might look like, the jolly reverend said he would let her know when from his seat in heaven he could look down at them. I said I would tell her what the roots looked like from my seat, and she and her sisters laughed from unholy joy, and the reverend squeezed my arm—and if you come here, and the

guide starts leading up to where you'll have to wonder what the tops of the trees look like, remember he got his climax from your correspondent.

An observer moving through California in two weeks senses two elements in that which goes to make up his impression of the state. And for the sake of convenience, and so as not to become involved in arguments about misnomers, he calls one element *Southern* and the other *Northern*. The Northern element is the one that relates California to the rest of the country and to American reality, and, like the Southern, it is not confined to one end of the state, albeit the appellations derive from the parts of the state to which each element is native.

Leaving the big trees, we set out for San Francisco along the Sky-line Drive, and from the heights we saw San Francisco Bay with the Diablo Range of Sierra Nevada beyond to one side, while to the other lay the Pacific with white moving mists and a white setting sun. I have never—counting even the approach to New York City via Sawmill River Parkway—seen an approach to a city to equal this approach to San Francisco. With Boulder Dam it is a memory of something planned and made by western civilization that I wish to take with me, when I go to look for old man Drysdale beyond the marshes.

I have quite often got myself in wrong by mistaking the identity of the person with whom I tried to discuss a subject. By inviting him to consider a problem *detachedly*, I have found myself relegated to an abhorred camp of Communism, Fascism, Surrealism, Democracy, Bourgeoisie, etc., as the case might be, and nothing has come of the discussion. To restore harmony, I should have had to take on the form of my adversary, which



is a thing I could do, as I am clay and still malleable, but I have worked hard towards my intended form, and would rather change him, if one could change a plaster cast.

The better way, by far, if one wants some fun and also come to some result, is to emulate Plato's Charlie McCarthy and ask for definitions. That, to be sure, is not a good way of making friends, nor is it useful, when one wants to find out something about the region's painting and its artists.

I had no sooner met Dr. Carl Sauer, Geologist and Professor at the University of California, than I realized I could "think aloud" as Dr. Perlzweig at Duke had called it, and that without offending him I could permit myself any viewpoint of anything whatever. And whenever during my sojourn in San Francisco I was with Dr. Sauer, encouraged by his example, I was thinking aloud:

"... They say regionalism is impossible in this country, but I don't see why it should be. From the tone and accent of a person's speech one can tell from what region he comes; why could not the different regions evolve each its own symbolism, or touch, or manner—wherever it lies—as a means to pictorial expression?

"What would be achieved thereby? I don't know, except it would help establish understanding and appreciation of the various landscapes as it has done in Europe. A common language might be good for the world, but a common poetic idiom wouldn't. To an informed mind travelling over the country it would be a richer and more stimulating experience, were he able to see the different regions—the South, the deserts, the mountains, the coasts, the prairies, the industrial areas—in terms of artists who have spent their lives learning to understand and to express in paint the moods of those various landscapes.

"Rural Holland can be seen easily with Van Gogh's eyes, and you feel you get into closer contact with Holland. Life becomes richer thereby. Belgian winter can be seen with Breughel's eyes, and you feel you know Belgium better for having seen it so. Brittany I have often caught looking like the Barbizon school, Paris as Utrillo, Venice as Canaletto, and so on where masters have worked.

"On this continent painters are not kept confined within national borders. Theoretically, they are free to follow their predilections. Between two oceans they may, and often can, go to the region where they prefer to paint. Painters have a way of becoming 'native' to such a region, and it is my belief a strong painter personality can prevent anything but his own viewpoint from prevailing. I can never see a fat Mexican with a sombrero without giving acknowledgement to Rivera. In Texas and in New Mexico I have had my eyes opened by the local painters, as for years I have been seeing the Catskills in terms of Woodstock. Greenwich Village? In certain lights it is like walking in a Coleman painting. I have yet to see what I shall see on going back through the middle west.

"Understanding and a sense of fitness. I saw a painting by Arnold Blanch of the Dakota badlands. Mystically, almost, they seemed less bad because he had made a good picture of them—as when a reef has been charted and accounted for. It gave me the feeling I have when I look at a map or at a globe: a feeling that things are moving along the universal grain, which direction is Beauty.

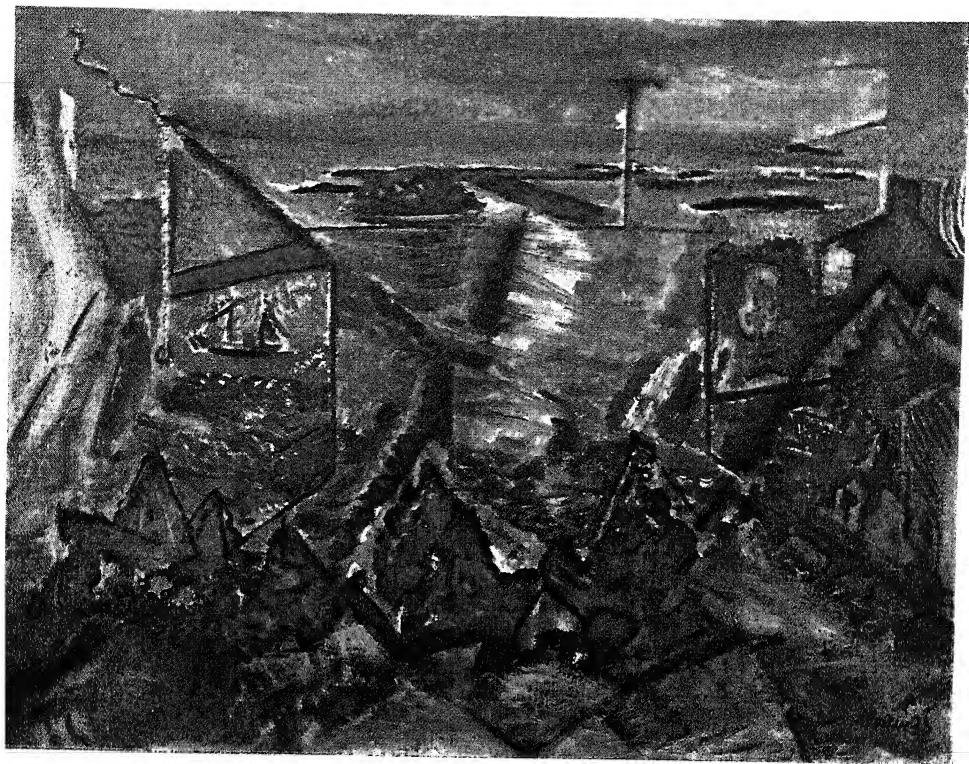
"Beauty? Professor Cox of the U. of C. in Los Angeles says it is fitness of purpose, and he is right in so far as fitness of purpose is one of beauty's attributes. 'A can opener can hold more charm than a church,' he says, and I agree; efficiency can easily

be determined by our own personal arrow. If we don't all agree on the Main Direction, it's because we have been given reasoning power and a faculty for doubting. Animals and plants don't doubt. Neither do crystals, nor gravity. We are the only doubters—and who is to say what is beauty in a painting, and where is a standard for determining art?

"Not until someone makes an uncontradictable statement as to what is the purpose of art, can laws to guide and direct it be logically laid down. Until then, art must be free to do as it dam'd pleases, and take its chances with our sense of beauty, our reasoning powers, and our faculty for doubting.

"All we can do, I would say, is to call it down when it becomes mystic and tries hocus-pocus. Hocus-pocus might be delightful to look at, but to relate it to man's destiny, or to prove his immortal soul by it, or the depth of his mind, should not be permitted, when the painter is merely an ignoramus who hasn't learned to express his wonder coherently. When he and his ignorant followers stand before it exclaiming: '*Il est beau parcequ'il est juste*,' and the thing is neither one nor the other, it should be the art critic's business to step in and call the fraud—only, too often the art critic is himself an ignorant mystic. The painter, although he never went beyond grammar school might have imagination and a gift for making masterpieces, but certain things one is not born with, and one of them is an education. Another, is second sight of the kind that can read the future in tea leaves and significance into surrealism. Education is acquired, but the other is a delusion nature pours into the vacuum it abhors.

"Surrealism? Beautiful things to look at, because in this school is inherent a tidiness and attention to detail which point along the grain. This school shocks by its strange and arbitrary



*Seascape*  
[Oil]

JOHN MARIN



juxtaposition of symbols, and an audience used to relating symbols to ideas is charmed or repulsed, but certainly not indifferent as it tries to relate surrealism to experiences of its own. And mystics as most of them are, they read into the artist's mind, *Depth*, and into his soul, *Immortality*. And the poor fellow himself standing around waiting to be told, finally comes to believe there is depth in his fur-lined teacups and mystic intelligence behind his *Perilous Buoyancy of an Altitude*. When humor in art consists of incongruous juxtaposition, a light and hilarious mood is evoked (vide Hogarth) or (vide Daumier) a sardonic smile to go with one's sharpened perception of social injustice. The juxtaposed incongruities in surrealism, on the other hand, evoke a species of awe and wonder—in the naïve. In the not so naïve it evokes sympathy bordering on compassion for uninformed human endeavor to find new expressions for the ancient 'Boo!'—I know about this because I have a surrealist streak myself, and I confess it because I recoil from the worshippers of hooley.

"Hooley in art and hooley in education. The reasons that were given me for hating and despising other nations when I was a child, were hooley. That teaching has been a handicap to my development as the human being I was intended to be, and as a citizen of the World. I should have been a more valuable member of society without it. As an individual I haven't benefited from it, and I don't see how the country that instilled it has benefited either. I know these beliefs were taught us to unite us. They were the specks of dirt around which our emotions were supposed to condense, that they might fall as a fruitful rain on the country. I doubt, however, anything but dragon's teeth could be nursed by such precipitation. We were brought up on hooley—on wrong values.

"Bringing up children? It should be a conditioning of them to take the fullest advantage of the twentieth-century civilization. It should be a means to make them enjoy the advantages of that culture, to travel, to understand, to ask intelligently and without fear, to perceive life as science and art has made it comprehensible. Instead of that the bringing up of children amounts to teaching them to suppress their desires for those goods, to subdue their hopes, to frighten them with capital punishment and life terms in an effort to prevent them from committing the crimes that have become unavoidable in our social set up.

"Punishment? I recall a painting showing people walking over a city square. The conventions of the picture were altogether acceptable, except that in the foreground was a man with his leg growing at right angles from the knee. It might have been all right in a work by Chirico, but here it jarred with the conventions of the rest of the picture, and with one's knowledge of anatomy. When I objected, the painter showed me, logically enough, that if he had painted the leg in accordance with nature, his composition would have been thrown out. I told him something was wrong with his composition in that case, but that correcting it by committing another wrong wouldn't help the picture. What I mean is: that painter's subterfuge to harmonize his picture was as stupid as ours when we devise punishment to counteract crime.

"However, the fact that we are ashamed to admit that we are merely revenging ourselves on our criminals, is, I suppose, an indication that we are improving. Children a generation ago were told they were being punished for their own good. Now we have ceased to beat them—although at times I feel the old Adam reaching for the ass's jawbone. It is one's own bringing-up from day to day that should concern one. Take these boys of ours.

They have come to an age where their bodily chemistry distills in them a desire to assert themselves, a sort of abstract desire to revolt, for standing up to the Old Man. As we have seen to it they have had all they needed as far as it was in our power, and as we have helped them to assert themselves, their brains have to conjure up reasons for revolt—exactly as in their sleep it conjures up imagery to have caused certain fear or pleasure reflexes resulting from gas on the stomach. This revolt complex makes them at times hard to live with, and we feel the time has come when they should leave the downs and try some of the caresses the world has for such fledglings. They can always come home on a visit and plant their 'I' on the premises and decorate it as the Maypole it resembles anyway. I remember myself at that age—coming home to show my muscle—hm—I was going to say something about fathers curbing their Jehovah complex. I guess my Id must have blurred the issue. What was I talking about when I started?"

"You were saying something about Rivera," said Dr. Sauer. "There is a painter . . ." Dr. Sauer went on to reflect on Rivera's ability to hold the interest of the American peoples with his abstracted workman, peasant, and soldier. Eventually people would tire of the abstraction, he thought, and on the whole Rivera meant less as a purveyor of symbols to the working classes than the old masters had meant in their day with their ever-varied symbol of the personality, Christ. "Rivera will miss out on his propaganda because he has no central figure to unite his propaganda around, as had the early Christian painters."

Looking around the subject, I found no reason to disagree. I had myself seen more Rivera soldiers, peasants, and workmen than were necessary to convince me—had I needed it—that Mexico, and the rest of the world could do with a new deal. All I



found to say was that his subjects never looked starved. But then Rivera's leanness didn't symbolize want, but meanness, if one is to judge by his capitalists. The beatitudes he represented by corpulence. "Man creates his gods in his own image," I said.

Dr. Sauer said: "The people will cease to react to an abstraction, glorified. Eventually they will revert to the church. The Catholic Church in particular has relieved them of one burden: their feeling of being sinners. They will come back to it on that account."

I said, "If there is no church to tell them they are sinners in the first place, they won't need one to tell them they are not."

That answer, on the face of it, looks like logic, and is one Voltaire might have enjoyed in his more cantankerous moods. It is also the kind of an answer which vitiates a conversation, and I felt a fool for having given it.

If the church were something that had come to Western civilization from the interior of China, it might have been necessary for it to create a demand for itself by, for example, telling us we were sinners and needed it to be saved. But the church came from nowhere but from ourselves. It is part of the formation into which our culture crystallized, and its function was, and to a great extent still is, to answer our big *Why?*

Consciousness of sin is not a concept instilled by the church, although the church—being in part, at least, human and subject to the laws of growing organisms—might in the concept have found a means to survive as a thing in itself.

Analysing, for the purpose of understanding it in others, my own consciousness of sin as I recall it from my early youth, I would say it derived from the pleasure it gave me feeling unworthy to be identified with the Light, and at the same time knowing that a lot of good people, confessed sinners all, were

ready to gather me and my penitence into the fold. But as something within me would always creep out and observe the penitent, I could never take the feeling of unworthiness wholly seriously. Deep within me must have been a strong feeling that I was eminently qualified to be identified with the light. As for fear of punishment for my "sin"—that is an emotion I never experienced. At this date I look forward with some composure towards final unawareness, but there was a time when I thought an eternity in hell preferable to the total extinction of the ego.

Thus I can only surmise about the feeling of sin, and my surmise is that it is more a consciousness of ignorance, and fear of the unexplained and unexplainable, than a consciousness of having done wrong. And therefore Dr. Sauer was right: eventually they will revert to the church.

The Happy Valley Hotel in San Francisco has inaugurated a custom which might well be emulated by all the hotels in the country, not to say the world. It has engaged a painter to be artist-in-residence, and he paints its murals, designs its menus, decorates its lounges with his pictures, and could, I suppose, show exhibitions of other painters here. He supervises all the art work including flower arrangements, and withal has time to paint and even to make a relief map of the bottom of the Pacific Ocean for a fountain basin on Treasure Island, the site of the San Francisco World Fair. His name is Antonio Sotomayor.

Dr. Sauer gave me a letter to him, asking him to show me the city.

Mr. Sotomayor is a Bolivian, so gentle-spoken that it was hard to hear his voice above the din of the San Francisco traffic, but I heard him suggest that a symbolism common to America North and South was not unthinkable. My acquaintance with

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South American painting limits itself to some rather wooden-looking battle pictures and some rather well done marines, also battle pictures, which I saw in Buenos Aires as a child—besides a confused recollection from the San Francisco Fair of 1915, of primary colors slashed onto canvas in a manner I recalled when later I saw the work of Zuloaga and Sorolla.

We went to the San Francisco Art Museum and found an exhibition of French art. A magnificent and important display of work from the impressionists to the most modern. Monet, Sisley, and the rest, each with up to a dozen canvases. A little, juicy, and red painting by Renoir showed up hale and bursting among his fellows' restrained grays and silver. A Monet, *Banks of the Seine, 1881*, had in it trees Van Gogh might have painted. In another, *Cliffs at Petit Dalles, 1884*, was a bluff in which the color was identical with Van Gogh's self portrait. The illusion was strong: the bluff became Van Gogh's self portrait.

Looking at the sun and sparkle and the observation of nature in these impressionistic canvases, one wonders if the "Modern French" get the serene joy from their landscape, that did these "Victorians." What do Chirico and Rouault know of nature? "Faustians," Dr. Sauer called that school, concerned with the individual detached from social and cultural meaning. Introspective, and insistingly putting on canvas that which (they hope?) differentiates them from other humanity, as over against interpreting man's destiny as owner of the earth.

I find this attitude on Dr. Sauer's part very easy to defend. Take for instance Kokoschka's portrait of Max Reinhardt. It is a portrait of a mood. Not Reinhardt's, but Kokoschka's mood expressed in the light reflected and split by the posing Reinhardt. But why should we be interested in an unquestionably asocial

mood segregating Kokoschka from common human awareness, the increase of which should be the object of art?

No sooner is there a question than—: The expressed mood of a sensitive artist, Kokoschka's mood, might well be of interest to us and might make us feel homogeneous, and constructively critical of our society. I don't know anything about art, but I'll take a chance with my sense of beauty, which makes me like Kokoschka's portrait of Max Reinhardt.

The next room we entered was large and filled with abstractions of contemporary "Parisians." Without exception they were tasteful in color, and eminently French—or European, continental European—relating themselves to that part of Europe where the yeast is working, where the fermentation is the greatest.

My quiet-spoken Bolivian guide said: "This art form is not native to this virile country. But the American painter has not found himself yet, as has the American architect and movie producer. He is still searching. From the murals might come something. The English and American tendency in art is illustration, but they have been made self-conscious about this tendency by Europe. No land ever had the illustrators those two countries had."

Along Van Ness Avenue we drove to the Palace of the Legion of Honor in Presidio Park. The day was sunshiny and clear, but above Golden Gate lay a gray fog. On the elevated drive we stopped and looked at the bridge, the longest span in the world, and painted red. The tops of the towers we couldn't see for fog, which also hid the tops of the brown hills. The water was deep blue, and above the fog was the blue sky. From the distance where we looked, the bridge reaching from one set of

mountains to another, made one think the rocks had oozed a red, spider-webby substance spanning the gap. The sight made me want to be a painter.

Having walked about among landscapes become native to me, and exhibited here in the Palace of the Legion of Honor by Leon Kroll of New York, we looked into the adjoining rooms, and, as if in answer to a prayer for a sign, saw an exhibition of American abstractionists. It had been a matter of indifference to me whether a subject had been abstracted *à la* Picasso by a Pole, a Jap, or an American—yet, after having seen the exhaustive show in the San Francisco Art Museum, seeing an American one so shortly after was decidedly illuminating. Each painting here, *malgré de lui* who had painted it, proved as no words ever could that the School of Paris was not the medium for this country.

We compared them: incontestably, the French had sprung from conviction and a native necessity, and within their scope must be called beautiful. Their rich color was profoundly satisfying, and obviously what the artist had aimed at. Form seemed secondary. Representation was almost out of the question. Yet, compared to the Americans, they were like fields on which had been fought a battle to express an emotion, a conviction, or a wish. Against them the Americans were like designs for linoleum and bathroom rugs: stiff, and soberly considered; logical, precise, and utterly uninspired; emasculated renderings of a foreign idea.

In the remaining rooms and corridors was an exhibition of French and American graphic art, of which, irrespective of nationality, the best work was by women.

Fisherman's Wharf! The location of the fish restaurant where Mr. Sotomayor took me to lunch is perfect. Through the win-



*The Blind Leading the Blind*    FEDERICO CASTELLON  
[Oil]



*Alcatraz*  
[Oil]

MILLARD SHEETS

dow at my elbow I could see the wharf just outside, and the decks of boats where fishermen were drying their nets. The water between the piers was blue and as clean as the sky and the clouds above—as were the seagulls caw-cawing among the wharf buildings. A most delightful place to eat: the white tablecloth, the yellow-crusts French bread, the red California wine, and the menu listing sea food from Abelone to Zoea in its final stage of crab eight inches across and boiled in big vats under the open sky. One's regret was the limited capacity of one's stomach.

At the offices of the California W.P.A. in San Francisco, Mr. Forbes was to take me about and show me what had been done on the W.P.A. along the lines of art. We were ready to set out, when a voice from an adjoining office sang out: "I want to see Mr. Klitgaard before you leave! Tell him to wait until I am through with my dictation!" Mr. Joseph Danysh, Supervisor of the California W.P.A., had spoken, and Mr. Forbes requested I be seated and wait until Mr. Danysh be through dictating to his Chinese secretary. I waited.

"Now I can see Mr. Klitgaard!"—and I went in.

Mr. Forbes had told him what I was after, wherefore Mr. Danysh didn't have to waste time asking, but could start telling me, as soon as I had taken the seat where the light from the window fell on my face, and from where I could see Mr. Danysh silhouetted against it. I listened. A couple of times I should have liked to get a word in, and finally I adjusted myself to absorb only such intelligence as pertained to that which I was interested to know: it seemed that any artist, whether on relief or not, who has a good idea, can submit it to Mr. Danysh and his board, who then, if they accept it, proceed to find a sponsor for



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it. In this manner California in general and San Francisco in particular has acquired some outstanding works of art. Finding sponsors was not difficult. There were at present more requests for works than the W.P.A. could supply.

The telephone rang. "One moment," Mr. Danysh advised me.

While over the telephone the Supervisor was telling somebody what to do, I composed a short sentence for the split second in which he would hang up the receiver: "Most interesting, what you have been telling me, but I have limited myself to American landscape painting. What is outside that I must give second consideration."

I thought I detected a chagrined note in Mr. Danysh's voice: "I think you have limited yourself quite unnecessarily," and Mr. Danysh proceeded to tell me what might be done with an exceptional opportunity like mine.

Wherever I had come, I had been impressed with the judicious governmental choice of regional supervisors. Not only were they capable executives, but they evinced an enthusiasm for their work, which made up for the fact that their duties gave them scant time to paint. Mr. Danysh had no time at all, he told me, but he didn't regret it. He had made the success of the California W.P.A. his work, and all ideas, including any I might have, were subordinated to it.

There is strength in a one-sided point of view, and if the strength is for good, one shouldn't quarrel with its owner's wish-dreams and rationalizings, which might strengthen the viewpoint further. Mr. Danysh claimed he had found in W.P.A. painting a difference from the painting done by artists who were not sure of having their pictures placed, and I surmised from

his delivery that the difference was decidedly in favor of the W.P.A. painters.

Realizing—as I said—the benefits of a one-sided point of view, I didn't disagree with Mr. Danysh, but asked him to wonder with me in what exactly, and where that difference lay. In the ensuing quiet I arose. Mr. Danysh arose too, and I saw he was built like a sportsman: spare, sinewy, and alert. A good fighter. He had a lot of reddish brown hair and a beard, and his eyes looked straight into the person's with whom he was talking—into his adversary's, he himself might say.

It seems that artists have had a chance to expand on the W.P.A. Some of them have been able to work in media which no private enterprise would have permitted.

Item: the stainless steel statue with granite head and hands on Old St. Mary's Square in Chinatown, commemorating China's liberator, Dr. Sun Yat Sen. The city gave the site, the Chinese Americans paid for the materials, and Benjamin Bufano on the W.P.A. made the statue. Bufano used the Buddha motif, but in the execution related the statue to twentieth-century China and to us. Seen on the background of red apartment houses it is a sight I wish to remember along with that of *David* on the background of Palazzo Vecchio, Florence.

Item: the marble-slab mosaics in the Alameda County Courthouse. Designed by Marion Simpson, and executed by Italian marble workers on the W.P.A.

Item: the Aquatic Park Building by the (also) W.P.A.-built pleasure craft harbor. A long room decorated with murals by Hilaire Hiler depicting undersea life: fish, octopi, and sea shells, carefully copied from textbooks on natural history, delicately painted, and laid with gold and silver. Their juxtaposition to

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such imaginary delights and horrors as enhance the bottom of the sea in fairy tales, makes surrealism come to its rights in this mural.

Item: the frescoes in the Coast Guard Administration Building on Governor's Island by Beckford Young: big, round, simple figures of men, horses, and cattle, all looking strangely Semitic, and facing the spectator in a crowded mass, which gives an impression of force. The mural, difficult to see as it is placed around a staircase, represents civilization following civilization: Roman, Peruvian, Western, etc.—symbolism not obvious or even good. Time shown by arbitrarily changing the extremely simple color scheme, occasionally cutting a man or a horse in half. A rare and impressive painting, reminding of nothing else, except, maybe, the figures on Titus' arch in Rome. More impressive yet is one's vision of what this artist might do in the future, when given a wall equal to his power.

In the evening from the porch of the hospitable Simpson home on the heights above Berkeley, I saw the lights of San Francisco and of Oakland, and the lights indicating the bridges. "The finest view we have seen the whole trip," said my companion—and personally I would not leave San Francisco without recommending the sight to the next traveller.

Ever since I had read Mark Twain's description of Lake Tahoe, I had wanted to see it. There are two routes from San Francisco, like two agents for two different concerns: number 50, running into 120, which offered to take us to Yosemite and show us the sequoia "General Sherman, oldest living thing on earth"—and number 40 going to Sacramento where was a Federal Art Project Art Center in charge of Beckford Young, whose

work I wanted to see after having seen his mural on Governor's Island. I chose route 40 and met Mr. Young, a tall, quiet man. Regrettably he had no work of his own there, but he told me of the Art Center's activities and showed me work from a recent exhibition by W.P.A. artists of Russian and Polish birth, claiming as his observation, that in spite of a different heritage, foreign-born artists working in America were fusing into a common robustness which was American. We looked at a little display of work by children who come to the Art Center classes to model in plasterocene. Mr. Young pointed out how the children's conception of animals had been influenced by the funny papers. The Disney influence was strong. So was the dinosaur of the Alley Oop strip. The Art Center had proved to fill a great and somewhat unsuspected need here in Sacramento—an experience common to all Federal Art Project Art Centers, it seems. Instead of the supposed thirty, ten times that number had applied for enrollment in its classes. The teachers were being paid by the W.P.A., but in time the town was expected to take the institution over.

Going eastward now, and climbing one, two, three, up to seven thousand feet, we found ourselves among mountains where man, to avoid feeling overwhelmed by the surroundings, will have to think of himself, not as an individual, but as part of his race or his civilization. I had leisure to do so, as I wasn't the one to drive along this steep and winding road: What, as an individual, could man accomplish among these forbidding verticals rearing to all sides of him? Here we snaked ourselves through them, safe and comfortable on a good road taking us from one point of our civilization to another, riding in a safe and comfortable car—two leather easy chairs, as from a well-appointed smoking room, magically flying through the moun-

tains! How much of this road and of this car was one man's accomplishment? *Who* could be called indispensable? No, one had to think of oneself as part of the race, or at least of the nation who had WILLED this road and this car among this wilderness of pine-clad mountains.

The first prospector for gold who sat by the little stream running deep below us (all you had to do was to look down the gorge and then close your eyes to see him)—an independent consciousness charged for its own good with a desire to find gold, and under the delusion that a find would bring fulfillment in all directions. But considered from a more detached angle: a feeler, unconscious of being merely stuck out by an ever-expanding civilization—and civilization oozing slowly after, taking possession. The mountains reared themselves to all sides of him as he sat there shaking his pan, looking for nuggets—one of thousands of unconscious feelers civilization thrust out in the process of taking possession.

The pines covering the mountains seemed to be of every kind. For some miles the persistent impression of everything standing on end was modified by a texture given the landscape by a pine tree with emphatically horizontal branches—a painter laying on his brush strokes horizontally to give width to his canvas. By not knowing the name and the habits of this pine—by not knowing the names and the habits of any of them—the traveller felt out of touch with that part of his culture's awareness which considers the trees. He felt poorer on that account, and he felt he would have seen more had he been better instructed. Nothing tends to boredom so much as being uninformed.

"The water in Lake Tahoe is so chemically pure," said the hired man of the camp at the shore, "that battery manufacturers

come here to get water for their batteries." That sounds pure indeed. It also sounds like the story of the wooden nutmegs, and I wondered if the hired man was spoofing me. Or rather, what I was in doubt about was whether he himself had been spoofed, for he seemed in good faith. Perhaps it goes back further than that. Perhaps the only one who is laughing up his sleeve is the fellow who invented the story. Perhaps the story has come back and convinced even him. Perhaps even battery manufacturers believe there are manufacturers who come here with pails to get water for their batteries.

We swam in the transparent water and watched the sun set over the lake, and in the morning we skirted its western shore. What we saw then was a rhapsody in blues: one kind in the sky, another on the mountains, and several within the clear, unruffled lake. Towards the shore it became turquoise, and where the bottom was visible from the heights, it was green. Owing to not having any shadows, the clouds looked appropriately and peculiarly clean.

At the town of Tahoe we went north to get back on route 40. My two impressions of the lake I kept in separate compartments, cherishing as ever the one Mark Twain had given me long ago. He had made me visualize, not a body of water in a mountain depression, but an optical lens of such celestial flawlessness and purity, that a certain efficiency-struck imagination I once knew, thought it should be used for something. (All this is long ago.) And the imagination took the lens and placed it at the end of the earth's shadow cone and made a camera, and with a heart for the light-sensitive film aimed it at something infinitely lovely and unattainable, which then too was very young.



TAKING human nature into consideration, border lines in Europe look far more logical than they do in this country—wherefore it seems that when employing logic to an analysis of border lines in North America, a rather deplorable trait of human nature can be left out of consideration altogether. If California were in Europe, her border line could conscientiously be hugging the eastern slopes of the Rockies from where Californian artillery could sweep the flat approaches of Nevada, and from the tops of which her anti-aircraft guns could pick Nevada bombers off the desert sky—all of which leads to the reflection that a book on how state border lines came to be drawn should prove entertaining and illuminating reading, a good way of learning U.S. history, and incidentally give one back some of one's faith in human nature.

Considering the delights with which California dreams of being identified, she must be said to have drawn the line in the right place up here where route 40 runs into Nevada. We had no sooner crossed the border, than the scenery changed, even to the flora of the sky: the clouds took on the flat-bottomed desert look we knew from the Southwest. The mountains became bar-

ren of pine, revealing in their nakedness the brutal things done to matter when the creative forces wrought it into mountains long ago. The sagebrush began to appear.

We were driving downhill, and the thermometer was going up in proportion. In and out of Reno we drove, disappointed by reality after having seen it figure in so many sprightly movies. Unless one is here on business, I doubt if Reno is exciting. Winnemucca is much more so.

But to get to Winnemucca, we first had to go through a desert with barren mountains to both sides, where prevailed such names as *Soda Lake*, *Carson Sink*, *Alkali Flat*, *Mud Flat*, and *Dry Lake*. But even on stretches like these, one would not welcome road sign advertising.

Thought in the desert: along with the movement to put art in federal buildings should go one to curb desecrating the American landscape by advertising.

The ground was oozing salt, and the desert had white streaks for long stretches. In spots the water had run fresh, though, and the combined sweetness of earth and water had invited life to a little party: an oasis with green grass and trees, a village with children, chickens, and dogs. Few and far between, they were, and driving from one to the other at 70 m.p.h. didn't seem to bring them closer together. And in the heat and dust and dryness the traveller felt weary at the thought of the miles and miles of uninhabited stretches, desert and green, of this country waiting to be expressed in paint; as over against the soil of Europe, digested again and again by the stomachs and minds of the people who had risen from and sunken back into it.

We found the streets of Winnemucca decorated with flags, and the men growing beards which gave them a look of dignity and learning of a sort, and to the town an atmosphere of the



same. Subconsciously one placed it in one's mind as a seat of occult learning.

It took me a moment to get over my surprise hearing what issued out of two such bearded doctors in the diner where we ate. Aristotle, with reference to the look of wisdom the beards gave them, would have said: "Out of time and place without danger," and would have laughed. When I asked the waitress the reason for the decorations, she told me the town was preparing for a rodeo, and the beards were to give visitors an impression of old western days. The beards did that, as beards often will. I tried to raise one myself once, thinking it might give me a kind of Viking or Lohengrin aspect, but my most severe critic said it looked mousy and moth-eaten, which probably was the way the Vikings looked anyway.

I also asked the waitress why she gave me nine huge silver dollars in change on my traveller's check. She said it was because she had no paper dollars. Inquiring further into that, I was told Nevadans don't like one-dollar bills, because they are afraid of getting them mixed up with their five-dollar bills. Knowing exactly how the opposite feels, I said I thought I understood, and distributing the silver in my various pockets, I went out to see the town. We found a public swimming pool with benches for spectators, and here I sat in the cool of the evening and watched my companion comport himself with half a hundred young Nevadans of both sexes. A joyful sight, the young human body in action.

We had an early start out of Winnemucca. A rooster had sneaked up under my window and let out an ear-splitting yell.

More desert. A cattleman on the bench by the swimming pool had told me I would come through cattle lands. I took his word for it. I had to, for I saw no cattle—only the sagebrush.

The barren mountains took on fantastic shapes, but in the strong noon light they became tedious to look at. It is the slanting light of morning and evening that brings out their beauty. It is then the shadows of the formations indicate how the new-born earth's tendencies were all along the grain of an evolution which logically led up to our awareness. It is in the morning and evening the traveller is shown how the Titans that handled the mountains when they were young and pliable, did so according to the laws of the universe, and obeying none more than that of Old Gravity. The mountain shadows of morning and evening bring out the now petrified deeds and intentions that made the good earth.



APPROACHING Utah I was thinking that my claim to be seeing a new type of landscape in every state I entered might be a wish fulfillment on my part.

Well then, what makes a landscape?

Virgin nature covers the surface of the globe with life, the more luxuriantly the richer the soil and the warmer and moister the climate. The higher the latitude and the altitude, the slower is the turnover, and where there is no water the earth is barren. Given then, the topography and chance light effects, the landscape is determined by temperature, precipitation, and the chemical consistency of the soil.

Then comes man. His actions on the earth would make a detached intelligence on the moon think he came as a colonizer, so called, and somewhat in the manner of the Spaniards in Peru or the suitcase farmers in Texas, holding aloft the device: *Après moi le deluge!* Regarding the life of his culture, man has scant thought of tomorrow; collectively he is where his arboreal ancestor was individually: an ape lives from day to day, a culture from generation to generation. The intelligence on the moon would think from the way he sees man working the earth, that

his real home was on one of the other planets. Nevertheless, man modifies the virgin landscape according to temperature, precipitation, and the chemical consistency of the soil, and in this process draws up the difference between the different landscapes more sharply. For better, for worse. For better as a reflecting agriculturist, for worse as an absentee landlord or industrialist.

This, I believe, is as far as I can take the problem. Not until I learn what caused the state lines to be drawn in exactly the places where they were drawn, can I supply further proofs for my contention that the landscape changed whenever I entered a new state—and on the strength of that contention claim regional painting for America and States' Rights for art.

There should be no quarrel about the change of landscape for a traveller coming eastward along routes 40 or 50 and entering Utah over the hills at the town of Wendover. From the top of those hills he is confronted with the Great Salt Lake Desert. It lies below him like a rather dirty and uninteresting snow landscape; flat, as that word applies to the cap-rock in Texas, with faint mountains far away, and two black lines running across it. One is routes 40 and 50, and the other is the tracks of the Southwest Pacific. It is thinking of the people who tried to cross it on foot that makes the traveller shake his head.

To the left, as one drives on, some "mining" is being done of the salt, but it is mainly as a race track the flats are famous. In one place the authorities have graciously offered the visitor the freedom of them, should he wish to see how many m.p.h. he can get from his car. There is no speed limit, no obstructions, and as there were no other cars when we were here, no danger of collision—just the same, I wished the youngster hadn't seen the invitation.

"Say!" he beamed. "That's something! Let's see what the crate can do."

Salesmen had told me 110, and I'd rather have kept taking their word for it, but I said: "O.K.—you can try 'er."

He swung off the road and onto the tracks and let fly. It was a disappointment. "Watch," he said. "Can't she kiss that 90?" She couldn't.

The snapshot I took of him running over the course once more was a disappointment too: the car seemed to be standing still. "That's where art has it over the camera," I told him. "The camera for its symbols depends on light. It has no imagination. 'S-W-I-S-H!' written in the air behind you occurs only in the funnies. It takes art to put speed into a picture." But so as not to make him lose interest in keeping the car polished, I told him our windows and ventilator had been open, and the carburetor unadjusted for an elevation of 4220 feet.

It cost a dime to be admitted to the beach at Salt Lake in one place. Everywhere else the beach was free to anybody. Yet everybody cheerfully paid the dime, for—reminding of the copper serpent Moses suspended from a stick in the desert—here in the burning sands was hung a fresh-water shower bath, an absolutely indispensable commodity to anybody who had bathed in the lake. People walking ashore through the extensive shallows turned white with encrusted salt.

Our Florida redbugs reacted as soon as they felt the luke-warm brine, and any sores and unhealed scratches served notice when they tasted the salt. But the salt itself seemed to close the apertures, for they ceased to bother us before we were knee-deep.

Laying oneself down into the surface was a rare and delight-

ful experience: one floated like cork and couldn't get under. Completely supported by the saturated mixture, one could sit up and look at the mountains, or at the dramatic yellow smoke issuing from the copper mines. I had never been in such perfect suspension. Lying on one's back looking into the sky without having to give a thought to one's body, it wasn't hard to imagine oneself to be the lake's awareness: timelessly gazing into infinity, feeling oneself enduring forever. And as long as I was floating in it, I didn't see why I couldn't consider myself as part of the lake. The detached intelligence on the moon wouldn't know the difference. If he had shouted down to the lake, and I had answered, he'd have thought it was the lake that answered.

Resting here, endeavoring not to get water into my eyes, I was heading north and looking south at Coon's Peak, but then I paddled my left hand and swung through an arc of a hundred and thirty-five degrees, which brought Antelope Island between my feet. It was the peace of heaven floating thus, until an insect in the shape of a poem by Victor Hugo began buzzing in my memory: a wave in the ocean had roared to a brook running into it, and asked it what it wanted. And the brook had coyly answered that all it wanted was to pour a little sweetness into you, *oh vaste mer!* The annoying part was that Hugo had seen a poetic symbol where none was. The brooks and the rivers it was, that carried into the sea the minerals that made it bitter, and that little brook with its cute little answer had fooled old man Hugo.

In the TOURIST room in Salt Lake City I found a shelf of books that looked unread since Cleveland's administration. I opened the glass case and took out a tome:

William H. Seward's Travels Around the World.

Edited by Olive R. Seward.

*"A mighty maze, but not without a plan"*

(Pope.)

With Numerous Illustrations.

D. Appleton and Co. New York 1873. . . .

I began to read about Salt Lake City. Mr. Seward and his party had called here, and from the conversations, description, and illustrations, the Mormons seem to have been first-rate colonizers. And considering the times, Mr. Seward and his party were amazingly liberal in their views of the Mormons: *"The apologies which they (the Mormons) make for it (polygamy) are not altogether destitute of plausibility. It promises to stimulate population when the sect in a territory, new and isolated, expected no accession by immigration, either foreign or domestic, except European converts. Polygamy provides a shelter and material comforts for supernumerary women who might otherwise fall into neglect, want, or possibly infamy."*

Reading this one wonders if human activity doesn't receive more stimulus from rationalizations than from reason.

The book is not without humor. Brigham Young talking to Mr. Seward said that, besides having wives who were married for time, the Mormons believed in *"sealing other wives for eternity only."* It was with regard to such women that he might have made the remark to which Mr. Seward referred: "I don't know how many wives I have."

The landscape became mountainous as soon as we left the city, and the road up through the national forests began to resemble twisted hairpins. It seems that a mental adjustment to surroundings is necessary—a kind of chameleonic effort on the



*Pony Express*  
[Oil]

FRANK MECHAU





*Jack Rabbits*  
[Oil]

OTIS DOZIER

soul's part—in order to be able to react without pain, or, if the environment is very impressive, to even endure it. The alternate escape is indifference.

It was a relief to come to the plateau where the mountains receded and the road abandoned two of the three dimensions through which it had been torturing itself and those on it. A new color began to creep into the scenery, evidence of a new state: the red of Colorado seeping through. Mesas appeared on the horizon as outposts of the Southwest. One little one looking particularly inviting we passed at 70 m.p.h., but I promised Peter I'd stop at the next and let him photograph that. We had no way of knowing this had been our last chance—we saw no more mesas. Around us was grazingland and scattered trees, but no cattle. As we proceeded the earth looked less and less able to support life.

Towards the north lay a colossal mountain range, at one point in which some kind of accident had happened. It looked more like an "Act of God" than a geological occurrence. One wondered if an enormous meteor had been hurled at it and bounced off into space again. The forces which in time immemorial had expressed themselves in molten mountains had had their manifestations interfered with here—but as these forces long since had withdrawn to the earth's interior or had radiated themselves into space, and as the cataclysm didn't matter to anyone who was aware of it, it was less a destruction than a change. In the monotonous landscape it was a welcome change, and looking at it I liked to imagine it was caused by a huge meteor. But a scientist I found in a crack when I went in to look, said it was caused by earthquake.

At a village of the unusual name *Jensen*, we saw an arrow pointing to the above-mentioned spot. "Seven Miles to the Na-

tional Dinosaur Quarry," it said, and we made the turn and drove in. A guide told us the quarry was an old lake bottom to which the dinosaurs had come as water grew scarcer, and had here died in droves. They were found, the same species, from nine inches to eighty-five feet long—but the guide couldn't tell me how old dinosaurs grew.

Under the W.P.A. project a museum is being built, within which the excavated specimens will be shown. The W.P.A. was working on it, and in a couple of years—Congress permitting—the country will add one more shrine to the many that go to make it the world's most fascinating picture book, where one may read without a passport or permit or threat of any kind, whenever one turns a page.

In this particular spot it would seem the earth had stood its horizontal layers on end, all because a flock of dinosaurs buried here kept telling each other their dreams. When the earth could stand it no longer, it cracked and vomited out their bones. The idea that once held these bones together had gone with the flesh and sinews which in the dawn of time had made formidable monsters, and the bones lay scattered and petrified in the sandstone without any meaning. A new idea has come and is pulling the ancient skeletons together: human ingenuity spurred by a wish to know and to let be known, and there in the museums of natural history stands the dinosaur as once he walked the earth two hundred and fifty million years ago.

That is one kind of fairy tale. Here is another: when God made the mountains He embedded petrified dinosaur bones in the sandstone, embuing the earth with a vast and imaginary past, that He might sit in heaven and watch scientists count on their fingers up to two hundred and fifty million years, which to Him is but as one day.



MY COMPANION carried a water pistol, and on the stretches between Roosevelt, Utah, and Steamboat Springs, Colorado, he amused himself shooting at prairie dogs which by the thousands inhabited the hilly, unprofitable landscape. He never hit any, but he had his fun hoping he would. For upwards of a hundred miles we always had a half-a-dozen of these little animals in view, while of those that had been killed by automobiles at least one or signs of one, was always on the black-top.

We came to Steamboat Springs after dark and found a tourist camp. There might have been others, but we were too tired to look further. The owner stood forbiddingly in the entrance as we drove in: "Watch where you're going," he growled. "You almost ran into that feller!"

Steamboat Springs is located fifty miles to the north of U.S. 24, which highway runs between Grand Junction, Utah, and Detroit, Michigan. "Telegraph Road" it is called, and "The Main Street of America," and the fact that Steamboat Springs lies so far from Main Street might account for its having retained a certain pioneer quality, a woolly westernness, which strikes the tourist refreshingly, like a spray of cold water in the face. I

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came into the camp's shower bath the next morning and was impressed with the starkness of it: no floor, no lights, one toilet, one cold shower bath, one grimy sink, and a broken 8 by 10 mirror. A little old man, agile and with a cheeky glint in his one eye, swung himself over the high doorstep. He was carrying a bucket of water and an armload of firewood for the big kitchen stove standing in one corner. Having already seen me, he didn't bother to look at me again when he piped: "Want a nice hot shower? All you gotta do is to light the fire. Here's your kindling." He let his firewood fall.

His voice was humorous, and I would have told him to stay, but I was just then too engrossed with a sign I had caught sight of nailed up above the toilet. This sign was the cleanest thing in there, and of a most elementary appeal. In large black letters on a white ground it said: "*DON'T . . . ON THE FLOOR.*" (The dots are mine.)

Oh, for the civilizing and mellowing influence of women! After the proprietor's angry scowl to my friendly, if prolonged, good-bye toot, it was a treat to be greeted by a cheerful "Good morning" from the lady "hash-slinger" (my companion's nomer) in the restaurant where we had breakfast.

A little floozie with blond curls was serving us. She was new at serving and fumbled pitifully, and as she fumbled, she'd look up at my companion to see if he minded much. The fact that I paid for the food seemed to have nothing to do with it—it was his approval she was after, not mine. And I wondered if perhaps the time had come when I ought to devote myself to matters of state entirely, and to the welfare of society as a whole.

One cannot drive fast along route 40 to Denver, but there is much to look at along this route: the twin peaks of the Rabbit Ears, and scenes of a kind I hadn't seen before—a new aspect

of the American landscape and as delightful in its way as lush Georgia and Louisiana, or limpid Texas, or the sere Arizona with its blue skies and little white clouds. The logic of the road, as outwitting the mountains it twisted, reared, and dived, and finally got us there, took all the driver's attention—but as I wasn't driving, I could look about. We had the heater going and overcoats on, and on the peaks not so far away was snow. The pine trees were spiky and gave a texture to the mountains I had never seen indicated in paint. Above the timberline the grass was green, above the grass was gray granite, and above that, snow. Above it all was a blue sky with white clouds, each looking like a poem about a cloud.

We were up eleven thousand feet and passed again the Great Divide and stopped to look around: the American Landscape. In one place I missed a painter I know, for confronting us was a pine-covered monolith, pine-covered to the timber line, and from there towering colossal into the sky—red, like the mesas of Arizona! We stopped the car and sat and looked at it, regretting her absence.

I had letters to Frank Mechau and Peppino Mangravite, and aside from these were painters connected with the Colorado Springs' Fine Art Center that I wanted to see, but not one of them was in town.

It was in particular Frank Mechau I had wanted to encounter, for it was his murals in the Washington, D.C. post office that had made me put Colorado on my itinerary in the first place, and on entering his state I had looked around for his long horizontal clouds, his green skies, and his red mountains. I had seen hints of them, I had sensed them, as one might the motif in the overture. They seemed to be early morning and late evening

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lights over landscapes not on the beaten track, and I had wanted to ask him to take me there.

The Colorado Springs' Fine Art Center is a rather unique institution, and placed in what to my mind is the most unique landscape in the world. It is placed in the cleanest and pleasantest city I have seen, and it is the city which is placed in the above landscape.

Not being a painter, I have only an intuitive knowledge of painters, and have to surmise about their motives and reactions. On seeing this Pikes Peak region my surmise had been that any painter coming here, be he still life, figure, or abstraction painter, would turn to landscape painting as the only means of protecting himself against the overwhelming impact of the surroundings; as the only realm in which to find the relieving metaphor against the spell of the mountains.

And I had surmised the Art Center was primarily an institution for taking advantage of the beauty of this locality, a temple—if you like—to the earth spirit of these long- and latitudes. But as I learned, the artists do not, and the Center is not. Artists will paint the still life, and social and Biblical symbols here as they did there—and judging from the local *Gazette and Telegraph*, painters in "Little London" as elsewhere indulge in such human squabbles as make life in an art colony interesting even to people not interested in art: Mr. Robinson calls Mr. Wright's work ". . . *fumes of human figures approximating slick magazine illustrations and Chinese mysticism.*" And Mr. Wright calls Mr. Robinson's figures ". . . *would-be monumentalism . . . damn near as sensitive as the figure paintings on the sideshow tents at a circus.*"

The Art Center, donated by Mrs. F.M.P. Taylor, is, I gather, self-supporting in its function of giving "to both professional art-

*ists and beginners unexcelled opportunities for the study of drawing, painting, graphic arts, and illustration*" (1938 Summer School Catalogue) without particular reference to the surrounding landscape, and might therefore just as well have lain in Brooklyn.

As I had no friends to advise me, I followed the printed suggestions of the Chamber of Commerce, and found myself amply rewarded. I hadn't believed scenes like these existed. I am referring to the Garden of the Gods, and to the adjoining and unsettled estate of General Palmer where I couldn't get in. From the road I saw the red and yellow rock formations of the latter and the tops of its pine groves—painfully unattainable, and hinting at Chinese paintings—in fact, an imaginative Chinaman closing his eyes after reading *Paradise Lost* might see what I saw.

An Irish-looking guardian told me through the iron gate that he was being paid money to keep out men like myself. He told me so man-to-man, he said, and added that he was sorry. We understood each other and parted friends as do the Irish and I always.

Colorado Springs was founded by General Palmer, whose cat-licked equestrian statue stands on the main drive. Above the city looms the range carrying Pikes Peak. The summit wore a little cloud hat when first I saw it, but I reconsidered that simile when I became better acquainted with it: Pikes Peak is like an oyster-stake in Long Island Sound on which sea gulls come to rest. A little cloud was always perched up there, and if it flew away another would swoop down on the summit. That was one of my reasons for not wanting to scale the mountain: a cloud to an aviator is like a love poem to a woman who *liebt einen andern*. The rest of us might find the poem expressive and beautiful,



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but to her it is a bore—and even the loveliest cloud viewed from within is fog.

I thought that thought in the restaurant where we had dinner, and then I thought of a really good simile, and then I looked up and forgot it completely. Only the memory of a deep satisfaction it had given remained with me. And the sight that had caused me to forget it was only an old farmer tourist and his fat daughter paying for their feed. He looked like our butcher, utterly phlegmatic, and she had a mopish expression and was dressed in large-flowered, shiny, and tight-fitting silk, with a toothpick sonnambulishly sticking out of her mouth.

The impressions I had received through the day had been rather too much for me. I hadn't known the earth could make such landscape gardening without man's help. William's Canyon, Seven Falls, and the Garden of the Gods—except for the red color—had struck me as Chinese. I doubt if Li Chen ever would have left the spot, had he come here. Walking in these places was like walking in one of his paintings. The cars and the crowds didn't interfere with the illusion, any more than would cloud shadows hurrying over the ground. The red sandstone monoliths reached up from the grass-covered earth. Their shape, color, and texture gave evidence of unique happenings in the world. As exponents of natural laws their simplicity seemed irreducible. They were supremely beautiful, and the earth presented them simply and reverently: equations written on a clean slate. I stayed among them—my twentieth-century fancy insisting on making use of them, insisting on communicating them to the rest of the world in a metaphor.

Why do we call these monoliths beautiful? I gave it up, but the monoliths are still there, serving, perhaps, as the earth's own memorial to the vanished red man.

The Seven Falls is a chain of waterfalls with wooden stairs going from top to bottom. Walking down them on a moonlit night in the sharp differences between light and shadow, the wanderer might recall:

*“ . . . die langen Felsennasen,  
Wie sie schnarchen, wie sie blasen!  
Durch die Steine, durch den Rasen  
Eilet Bäch’ und Bächlein nieder.  
Hör’ ich Rauschen? hör’ ich Lieder?”*

Or:

*“ . . . he heard the cataract’s laughter.  
Heard the falls of Minnehaha.  
Calling to him through the silence”*

as the falls dropped one into the other, and

*“Like a downward smoke,  
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn did go;  
And some through wavering lights and shadows broke,  
Rolling a slumberous sheet of foam below.”*

Or:

*“And also water  
And water  
A spring  
A pool among the rock  
If there were the sound of water only  
Not the cicada  
And dry grass singing  
But sound of water over a rock  
Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees”*

Having walked through the Li Chen tenth-century paint-

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ing, William's Canyon, you become disenchanted as you enter the Cave of the Winds and a souvenir shop. The caves are named *Celestial City*, *Mysterious Temple of Silence*, *Oriental Garden*, *Bridal Chamber*, and *Valley of Dreams*.

Mr. Stanley Lothrop, General Director of the Fine Arts Center, took me through the buildings. In the theater lobby I was shown four murals which for matching their dignified surroundings were perfect, and which for symbolizing the activities of the stage were equally perfect, and which, aside from that, were excellent paintings in themselves. The pale color, the drawing, and the symbolism of each harmonized with the color, drawing, and symbolism of the others, and the four backgrounds were all of the same clear gray, which in each case was carried down the sides of the doors above which each was placed—getting lighter as it got lower.

I asked Mr. Lothrop what artist had painted them, and learned to my surprise that in this day of emphasis on individuality, not one but three artists were responsible: Dasburg had made one, Ward Lockwood two, and Kenneth Adams one. I hadn't believed three individual painters could have agreed upon restraining their idiosyncrasies to create one harmonious effect; yet here it was—a memorial to artistic understanding of a problem, and coöperation to solve it.

In his mural containing two Harlequins and a Colombine, Kenneth Adams has achieved an immensity of drama with surprisingly simple means of pantomime, posture, and light effects. All four murals are clever—a cleverness bordering on the *New Yorker* ad—but permissible, even desirable one would say, in decorations pertaining to the lighter happenings on the stage.

Mr. Lothrop showed me the Art Center's exhibition: "Paint-

ers West of the Mississippi." Every year the Center gives this exhibition, which then tours the country. This was the fourth that had occurred, and in it I found the work of most of the painters I had met since I had crossed the Mississippi River.

Mr. Lothrop doubted an essentially regional art could be said to exist in America. "The W.P.A. projects have stimulated a regional outlook and helped create a regional art," he admitted, but he thought that easy transportation and frequent change of residence militated against regionalism. "Yet trends are developing in various Western centers," he said.

I suggested these trends might not necessarily be indigenous to the west, but spring perhaps from the strong personality of a teacher imported from the east—or from eastern painters migrating and founding schools and becoming influences whether they cared to or not. "As Dasburg and Marin in Taos," I said, "or as Miller and Watkins in New York and Philadelphia."

Mr. Lothrop asked if Watkins was becoming an influence in New York. I said that one good painter at least had become decidedly earmarked by Watkins. I couldn't then tell him how at the New York World's Fair I had marked twenty-seven canvases in my "Modern Art" catalogue, as a direct outcome of Watkins' way of painting.

Walking down into the basement Mr. Lothrop made a silent gesture at a big "old master" hanging over the stairway. In its elaborate frame it was an imposition among the very modern planes and surfaces of the Art Center.

"Mr. Kress?" I asked. Mr. Lothrop nodded. Mr. Kress had graciously donated it from his collection.

(I once called upon a museum director in Europe and found him in a rather upset state of mind: a millionaire had died and left his art collection to the museum on the condition that the

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museum exhibit all of it, "which," said the director, "prevents me from storing in the cellar a lot of stuff sharp dealers have made him fall for."

Employing—as is the habit of hind-sighted people—the past conditional, I said: "Your donor should have found out what was no good and weeded out the duds. By donating them to the provinces, and the remaining collection to the capital, his fame among the cogniscenti as a discriminating collector would have been immortal.")

Going over the exhibition again, alone, I bore in mind Director Lothrop's words about this show being more expressive of American art and freer from contemporary European influences than most exhibitions collected in the East. I didn't find it so, except for a few—except in particular for a couple of the Texans, whose canvases, expressive of Texas, were like windows in the wall through which one recalled Texas.

Readers of *The Incredible Voyages of N.N., Esq.* will recall the windows in Geirod's Hall through which the traveller looked out at landscapes where bygone painters were being rewarded, and permitted to work in the Master's media: arranging the light, and the color values in the lands from where they once drew their inspiration. Otis Dozier's painting of a Texas desert will probably warrant him a window in Geirod's Hall from where the traveller looking at Texas will see Dozier's spirit arranging the sagebrush, the long-eared rabbits, and the little Texas clouds.

Frank Mechau, who wants to relate his work to the coming American architecture, had an oil in this show called *The Last of the Wild Horses*, which now hangs in the Metropolitan Museum of New York. On the wall of the Colorado Springs Art Center, running the whole length of the garden, he has a frieze of gallop-

ing horses, and in the library a mural, *The Roundup*. In the Colorado Springs post office are two more, and every one is showing completely satisfying symbols of men and horses, and more than satisfying symbols of earth, clouds, and sky; pictures, the inspiration for which exists where nobody had been, consciously, until Frank Mechau had discovered there were such places and had reported on them in paint. He comes down his mountains carrying his tablets imbued with an unearthly sheen, and those who go up there after him will see the landscape in his terms, and I doubt if it can be seen better.

It seems to be on the western slope Mechau hangs out, and he says that on his side of the range is no new culture aside from the vestigial wine and sausage making that some of their Franco-Italian families have brought with them—and mentioning victuals, he wonders which is the more beautiful, venison on the hoof or in the oven.

I have here directions for how to find his place when setting out from Colorado Springs. It is a piece of rhapsodic writing, and although it is a temptation to use it in its entirety as a beauty spot on these pages, I refrain from doing so. "*Color in flowers and feathers*," said St. Fenimore, "*did not exist on earth until eyesight had appeared to warrant it*"—and even now humanity doesn't get the full significance of it until its artists have pointed it out. And Mechau is not through pointing. I'll direct nobody up there.

If I had had these courses and distances when I was in Colorado Springs, I should have gone, "and then," he says, "we should have driven across South Park, a vast, beautiful, undulating knolled plain buttoned by clumpy cedars, like the hills of Arezzo, placed in an ocean of ochres and ringed around with snow-capped mountain ranges . . .

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"In Leadville we should have found no culture, but a brutal thing which inevitably calls for expression both from literary and plastic angles. We would bend an elbow in the old pioneer bar and watch the gals solicit trade from the nearby row of cribs, as the brothels are called. Here is the West as it was in the beginning. I am not romantic about this sort of thing, but I am near enough to see it has its value as raw life stuff. . . . It needs its Balzac or Lautrec or at least a Faulkner. . . . Zane Grey is the nearest approach. . . .

"At Glenwood there is *RED MOUNTAIN!* It starts like a hawk swooping up from the banks of Colorado River. The soil is sheer Indian red from its base where the old Devereaux ranch sprawls, to its ridges where dark pines march along. I have tried to use this extraordinary mountain in the central panel of one of the prudellas in the Washington P.O. I barely managed to sense it, and will go back to it, when I feel big enough to try.

"From the rim of Red Mountain the Flat Tops commence to roll in an unbroken area of sixty miles of crater lakes and virgin forests of pine. Up one of the deep canyons winds a road, a thirty-mile cul-de-sac. There is Redstone on the Crystal River, but nothing has been said or done about this magnificence. . . .

"And there above Carbondale surges Mount Sopeis, which I tried to use in the *Roundup* you saw at the Art Center.

"As we leave the ranching country, we slip between colossal crags of granite, a final gateway just large enough for the car and the river to squeeze through . . . and arrive at . . . a fantastic little town entirely built by a multi-millionaire about thirty-five years ago. A little Utopia . . . deserted," and Frank Mechau goes on to describe things it is too painful to have

missed, and which, if advertised, would put a four-lane cement road to his door.

Like Rockwell Kent, Frank Mechau takes his place as one of the tempestuous spirits hovering over the American Landscape.

When I came back to our very nice TOURIST abode, I found the landlady and her sister, the minister from Iowa and his wife and daughter, and the two maiden ladies from Detroit with their invalid brother, all gathered in the parlour waiting for me. They had heard I would be back at five, and would I sit down now and have some tea and tell them something about myself and my books—

“Making publicity for me?” I said to Peter when I got up to our room, where he was lying on the bed reading *True Detectives*. “Will you tell me why you did it?”

“Oh, what do you expect?” he answered with that insurmountable lack of logic he has seen work so well in his home when I hold the better end of an argument. “This town is dead—and the landlady said her guests were here for the whole year. They wanted to meet you. They want some fun just like other people.”

“Well, they had it. And so did I. Enough to last me a week. I don’t have to go to the movies tonight.”

“Oh come now,” he said. “Can’t you take a little joke?”

In spite of having been to the movies he was in one of his “silent” moods the next morning as we drove towards Denver. Perhaps we had got up too early, but I had wanted to avoid the traffic on this route 85. He was driving, and doing 60.

Youth is difficult to handle. My own is not so desperately far away that I can’t remember what an oaf and bounder I was.



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Nevertheless, my first-hand experience then doesn't seem to be of any help to me now, and I may be terribly ill-advised when I give breath and tongue to profundities in the presence of youth: "People who for some obscure reason feel sorry for themselves," I said addressing the air, "become very keen at devising means for hurting others on whose sympathies they have any claim at all. One had better humble oneself and humor them and show signs of feeling sorry for them, so as not to make them desperate."

Doing 60 m.p.h. he at that moment swerved violently and almost threw me out of the car. He stopped. "A snake!" he said excitedly. "Did you see it? A snake in the road. I barely missed killing it!" He looked at me and said politely and with more consideration than was really flattering: "What were you saying just as I swerved?"

He drove on. The intermezzo had restored his equilibrium, and his next words revealed to me a viewpoint my generation should not have dared voice at his age, but which revealed that generation as represented by me, less august and more human than I had dared hope. He said: "When I am cranky, why can't you just laugh it off as I do when you are cranky. When you pick on me, I just shrug my shoulders and laugh it off inside."

I was a little taken aback at this, but counted ten before speaking. "I'm never cranky, and I don't pick at you. At times I have to use my superior judgement and—" I counted ten and didn't say it.

"Drive on," I said. "Let's get to Denver and have some breakfast." His heart was in the right place, as witness the snake—and his head too—if his gall bladder isn't.

In Denver he tried vainly to get into the United States Mint to see them make dimes and nickels. In the meantime I went to

the Denver Art Museum, which at present is located in the Civic Center's Municipal Building, and where there is a choice, if small, collection of paintings. The director, Mr. Donald Baer, was in Washington, D.C., working on the W.P.A., but his assistant, Mr. Bartlett, showed me about. It seems the reason for the small collection on view is that the museum hasn't space enough to hang all the paintings it owns. However, it has a sum of money with which to build itself a new home, and there appears to be some doubt whether they should place it in the outskirts of the city in a park, or in the city proper, where more people can find time to visit it—a dilemma I should put to a city vote.

Mr. Bartlett showed me a room where the museum stored a comprehensive collection of Southwestern painters for which it has no wall space. Its white hope seems to be two young Colorado Springs sisters, Ethel and Jean Magafan, by name. I saw some of their work here, and in Washington, D.C., I had seen a mural sketch by one of them. They seem to be taking it out of their native Colorado in a way that warrants the hope. Mr. Bartlett, with whom I spent a couple of hours, extended my Southwestern horizon and made me realize better what I saw when I came to the Southwest on my trip through the L. with B.T.—and I in return endeavored to extend his in the northeastern direction, where I live.

Notes on paintings dotted down on a *Guide to the Fine Arts in Denver* got out by the City Club, and comprising absolutely everything pertaining to art in Denver:

A small—for him—Veronese, one of the best I have seen—and another by him (?) or his son, donated by Mr. Kress.

A large Fiene landscape. Almost without color. Best Fiene I've seen.

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Mangravite: *Nostalgia*, bought by the "Let's keep that!" group.

An excellent small Bellows: *Fountain in Central Park*. Fore-ground not handled well. Empty. Same can be said for a juicy Courbet, *Cows in Landscape*.

A Ryder with green (!) water. Reminding of Henry Mattson.

A lush and juicy Cezanne, *Flowers in Vase*, very similar to piece by Fatin Latour's wife, about whom is sob-story on note. (Good way of making visitor look at picture twice.)

Two Derains, strangely academic in manner. Trust those Frenchmen never to do anything but in best of taste, though. (Good taste seems to be earmark of present-day French painting. Hardly enough to make great epoch.)

Mural by Mechau: *Horses at Night* (Coming from Colorado Springs I saw horses in field remarkably in terms of Mechau. Realized their eyes are *not* big, and that a herd of horses are not so and so many individual animals, but a body subscribing to the laws of an aggregate.)

We came into Kansas landscape long before we were out of Colorado. The evening sky was trying to harden itself into a Mechau effect: greenish, with black thread-like clouds. In the east, however, a large cloud was lying round and roseate on the horizon, like the head of a Middle-Western painter claiming possession. Like the head of John Steuart Curry.



IN KANSAS the price of gasoline dropped from twenty-three to seventeen cents a gallon! No state could extend a more acceptable welcome to the tourist, even if it isn't meant as such.

As we crossed the border, I sat looking at the sky. The sky is an important part of a landscape, and between the sky and the earth below it, is more of a relationship than is generally realized. For their good looks both earth and sky depend on water, regarding which there is a male-female relationship between them: the earth beckons with her topography, and the sky clouds over and responds. Together they depend on latitude and on their proximity to big bodies of water. They depend as well on the sun's position in the ecliptic and on its hour angle, and also, perhaps, on the temporary surface condition of the sun.

Above the Mechau green near the horizon, was a gray canopy, in which was a hole showing a sky so blue that any jury of city artists would have rejected it, and any art critic would have called it a wish-dream blue. But the High Master up there, who knows His job, only laughed, and taking out the gray, painted the whole dome blue. It was grand to watch Him.

We had left the little town of Limon by the big crossroads in

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Colorado. The mountains had gone, and no new ones had come. Around us lay a circle, flat and extensive as we hadn't seen since Texas. The enormoussness of it made farms and trees look diminutive and picky. The houses here were in better repair than those we had seen in Texas, but in Kansas, to be sure, they don't have the flying grit sandpapering houses. What flies here is soft dust. The windmills were the same, but the silos were built of brick.

In Limon we had stayed at the sheriff's, and when his wife had taken me upstairs to show me a room, I had stopped on the landing to look at an old favorite print of mine hanging there: *The Two Roads*—the Primrose and the Straight-and-Narrow. I had seen this print in Edinburgh once, and once in Brussels, and here it was again. I nodded to the symbol of the seventh commandment, the chemise-clad whore beckoning to a young hesitant, and said: "Nice picture," when the sheriff's wife turned to see what was keeping me.

"Have *you* found the road?" she said.

Instead of telling her that I hadn't found the choice of it as easy as implied in that picture—instead of holding forth about the straight lines in a Mercator map making curved lines in a Great Circle map, I said: "I'll give you one better than that!"

In the back of my car I carried a stack of pictorial maps of the Holy Land and Egypt, showing the history of the Jews from the exodus to the burning of the temple—reproductions in color of a large painting I had made for a chapel in Chicago. I had taken them with me for occasions like this, and had left them dotting my trail, for the occasions had been many.

I gave her one and a booklet containing a key and the Bible quotations illustrated—and the members of her chapter came in to look—and my companion asked why I couldn't have waited

until the morning, for they kept us awake interpreting and recognizing.

Note on the Kansas roadside: the sunflower—which has followed us through all the states, growing bigger and more plentiful as the land became lush and juicy, and scraggly and small as a black-eyed Susan where water was scarce—has now grown a yellow center (?).

Disagreeable note on leaving Colorado over an unspeakably bad road, corrugated, and with holes six inches deep and three or four feet across, avoiding one of which the driver would fall into another: the reason for the corrugation in Benton's figures is that he makes the drawings for them riding over this road.

We came upon weathered and gray farms in the drought area. There were still people in them. Big dead trees stood sentinels over the houses. It was as if merely thinking of black crows flying over the site, or of a model T disintegrating in the front yard, would have brought those symbols into being. Everything in this landscape seemed so eager for this association of ideas, that a mere realization of their appropriateness might have brought them into being.

Appropriateness? Well, appropriate to a not uncommon outlook of the present day, as a tempted St. Anthony would have been appropriate in a sixteenth-century landscape of this type. And yet, what has "appropriate to its time" to do with art?

Recently, at a Catskill mountain resort, when I was showing a collection of pictures and taking a public vote on the favorite, I became involved in an argument with a young schoolteacher, who, alone of the audience, had voted for a woodcut representing road workers, and not a very good example of the medium at that.

She stated that her choice was predicated by the understanding of this artist who alone of them all had felt the necessity for putting social implication into his work. She opined further that of all art, only such as contained social implication, contained the elements of greatness. She impressed me as coming from the communist mold, and could be bent with as little success as any other plaster-cast.

The night before she and I had both happened to attend a play by Paul Green about Southern revivalists, given at the resort by a troupe of travelling actors. The troupe had given the first act, skipped the second, and made up a third into a mock revivalist meeting in which the audience took the part of a revivalist audience. It was the most blasphemous thing I have witnessed, and it struck me how orthodox religion has lost its meaning completely in the social outlook of a certain type of "advanced" people.

On hearing this girl, who had enjoyed the play, assiduously and religiously demand an implication in art favoring the proletariat, I said that I could imagine a similar demand being voiced among advanced people in the first couple of centuries of last millennium—only then they had been clamoring for the gospels and the life of the saints to be the subjects of the arts. And I asked her—for fun—to imagine herself part of an audience like last night's, ridiculing, in time to come, the ideals for which she today was ready to become a martyr. Our talk ended there, and I had no further chance to discuss the subject with her.

I think temporary social implication is as justifiable in art as any other implication, in as far as it can neither make nor mar an otherwise bad or good picture. On certain counts I believe in putting in social implication, as in certain cases it will make people, who otherwise do not look at pictures, look at them.

And I believe in such people being made to look at art, because I believe that so occupied they will come to like it. This will make art prosper, and art, I take it, is the blossoming of the bush which otherwise might turn to wood.

We came through Government Reclamation Land. They seem to be doing these things well under the New Deal, as far as a tourist blowing through at 60 m.p.h. is able to tell. The fields were doing well, and the landscape was the green God had intended for it—when again it changed to dust.

As we approached Topeka, houses and farms became more plentiful and the earth better cared for. It really looked as though the scattered farms out there on the plains had more earth than they could handle.

Poetic note in Manhattan, Kansas: We stopped at a TOURIST owned by a widow with two daughters of whom the oldest was sixteen. On the morning we left, Peter was up before me for the first time. When I came down, he was sitting on the porch in the early sunlight, and with him was Peggy, demurely sewing on a dress. This, obviously, was not what she was supposed to do on ordinary days, for inside her mother and sister were busy cleaning house. Gazing eastward I remarked I was going to shine the car to-day—for, like the mother, I had recognized the grain of the universe.

At Lawrence I stopped at the University of Kansas and asked for Benton. He was at the University of Kansas City I was told, whereupon I set out to see the art museum. Among many Oriental things I found some of Hukosai's thirty-six views of Fujiyama, one of which had been marked as having been mentioned by Hauptmann in *Atlantis*. I appreciate that way of linking up



four cultures: Japanese, German, painting, and literature—and I looked further to see if there might not be another of the thirty-six views, generally known as *The Wave*, which too has been mentioned in a book, in this instance as bearing witness to the peculiar claw-formed seas of Kuro Shiwo. But it wasn't there, and had it been, I doubt if it would have borne the reference—d. it!

Towards Kansas City the country became fatter and richer-looking, but no better than lands I recalled from the East, if as good. In spots it reminded of New England, in others there was too much green for it to be seen in terms of painting—but with the drought areas in fresh memory, good to look at in other ways.

I found the museum in Kansas City an imposing building—a regular Art Museum. In here I saw a canvas by Varnum Poore: *Dead Pheasant*. The gold on the breast of this bird was painted in a way that made me wish the picture hung a little nearer where I live.

The interior of the museum is arcaded around a fountain-decorated yard in the Italian more than the Kansas manner, and under the arches of the porticoes artists were decorating the ceilings—not with Kansas symbols, but with Renaissance arabesques in a kind of dry fresco under the leadership of the painter, Mr. Macmorris. When Mr. Macmorris isn't painting arabesques, he is giving his time to non-objective painting, which, he told me, is the art form of the future. Regrettably he had none around I could look at.

But I have looked at non-objective art in other places. I have a friend, George Franklin by name, who is a non-objective painter, and, as people generally do, I think he is my friend because his work is good, and not vice versa.

Mr. Franklin looks like the half-head of the Neanderthal man exhibited at the Museum of Natural History, and he walks as



*Green Pastures*

[Water color]

ADOLF DEHN



both sides of this man presumably walked. But his mind is nimble and active and apt to surprise you. To account for it, I have been obliged to imagine it as the issue resulting from Miranda's impregnation by Ariel, during which pregnancy she was frightened by Caliban. That, at any rate, would account for some of its amazing vagaries.

George Franklin isn't interested in raising flowers, but being strongly identified with life, and interested in the more odd manifestations of natural adaption, and being able to have his sense of humor excited by the simple reactions of the sophisticated naïve, he once raised a garden of his own: into the minds of various acquaintances he laid a seed, a different one in each case, of a conception of himself and none of them very likeable. As these cultures grew, he visited and tended each, keenly watching how the host reacted to the "parasite" as he called it. Having told me about them, Franklin asked me to sit in on conversations where these parasites would be barking defiance at one another, and insisting each on its own supremacy, through the medium of its host.

During the Battle of Jutland, George was in command of a battery of four-inch guns on the port deck of *S.M.S. Stralsund*, and while he was trying to have his men hit the British ships, and listening to their shells coming over, all that really concerned him was to do nothing which might warrant him a bawling out from his superior, the fire leader in the fighting top.

"There was something nice about the times when fleets came out and met each other according to Hoyle," I said. "Salamis, Trafalgar, Jutland—as over against this Battle of the Atlantic."

"The Battle of the Lamps," he nodded. "The battle for putting out the lamps."

"You agree with me then, that Hitler is no lamp-lighter?"

"No, he is an extinguisher of lamps," he said. "Of kerosene lamps. He wants to have electric light installed in keeping with the twentieth century—as the laborites in England, as people everywhere since Hitler have discovered they want it."

"They are doing a powerful lot of damage in the process," I said.

"Rockefeller, who put out the whale-oil lamps might have said the same about Edison. But then Ford and Knudsen happened, and Standard Oil kept paying dividends. You have to break eggs to make an omelette.—In the meanwhile the cachalot is saved for the contemplation of the poet."

With this man, so accounted for, I have often discussed non-objective art.

I said to him: "Painting, I believe, originated when man wanted to communicate an experience to his fellowmen more lastingly and emphatically than words and gestures could do it. Art, it would seem, has evolved along a line which had its origin in a wish to express joy or fear, or what not, in an experience too valuable not to go on record, by making a replica of the central object in the experience, whether this was a mammoth, a bison, or a woman. The caveman artist must then have discovered his inability to make an exact replica, and as time went, and as artists reflected more and more on their powers, this inability to make an exact copy of nature was accepted by them and their audiences. It was eventually made into a virtue, while its antithesis, exact representation, was relegated to photography and the wax museum. Representation in art has been on its way out, until its negation is apotheosized in your non-objective painting."

George Franklin, who studied with Paul Klee, then said: "Circles, squares, and triangles juxtaposed and organized within

the limits of a frame is Beauty—as you define it—reduced to its simplest terms. Beauty, to be stated in paint, doesn't have to relate to human everyday experience. All visual beauty can be reduced to non-objective geometrical forms."

Then I said: "Yes—but can beauty be so conveyed? It might in general, as abstract Symmetry, Balance, Harmony, Expediency, Stability, Appropriateness—but not in specific cases. Clive Bell arguing for non-objective painting claims representation is irrelevant to a work of art. But suppose man, as I said, first made a picture from an urge to communicate an impression received through his superior sense of beauty—a superiority, by the way, that seems to go hand in hand with an ability to make effigies—suppose *that*; then we might also suppose that the impression he had received of the forceful, well-balanced, efficient body of a mammoth could be better conveyed by his making a picture of it that looked like it."

Then Franklin said: "To the caveman, yes. But we are not cavemen. As you said yourself, the camera will take care of telling the story. Art is concerned with what you call the Symbols of the Will of the Universe. Non-objective art is, and that is the only art which can precipitate those pure symbols. The non-objective circles and figures agree with your trick-concept, the Grain of the Universe."

Then I said: "Don't scoff at that omnipotent and pragmatic concept. It even solves the problem between the pragmatists and their opponents. When the pragmatist says: 'It is true because it works,' the rejoinder comes, 'It works because it is true.' But 'true' and 'works' in this case are synonyms indicating the grain of the universe. When an idea is along that grain it is true and it works—and you know now what the fellow meant when he said that Truth is also Beauty.

"However, I claim that landscape painting has a mission which neither the camera nor non-objective art can take on. It is to point out—it is to enable people to see their beautiful environment beautifully, and their ugly environment as ugliness, and in terms of their artists. Their own artists! America should not be seen in terms of French artists, any more than the *Marseillaise* should be sung by the French in German. Although this can be done only by representation, color photography is no substitute for it, and abstractionism, surrealism, and non-objectivism will never take the place of it."

Then he said: "I never said it would. There are things about a landscape which only landscape painting can convey."

Then I said: "Good!—I have discussed this subject before with the Los Angeles painter, Knud Merrild, who also paints non-objectively, and who maintains it is the art form of the future. With him I claimed portraiture to be the one thing immune to infringement, and he ceded that point. I am looking for a third now, with whom to discuss still life painting. I want to know how the bloom on a peach can be synthetically conveyed through circles, squares, and triangles.

"My most forcible reason for claiming representation in art, however, is that I should miss it as I would my eyesight, if it vanished from painting."

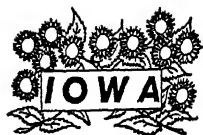
Then he said: "Whether I agree with you or not, that might be a good reason for you to hold on to it. But why should the future world abide by your questionable conditioning? According to your own teaching there can be nothing absolute or even valid—except to yourself—about your contention that representation is indispensable to art. I understood you to say that no universal or everlasting rule could be laid down for anything."

Then I said: "You win!"

He laughed: "But I am not fighting for non-objective art. I have gone into it for devious reasons, and I shall come out of it a better painter, more able to make representative work of the kind I want to do. Furthermore, I don't think non-objective painting can be so hot, when I see painters, against whom even the gods fight in vain, doing it."

Then I said: "I think you are sensible, and that you are working in the direction things go, that is, along the universal grain. There is a kind of painting which I think of as the Dominant, and I like to compare it to China. Through the ages China has been invaded by new peoples and new ideas, and China has made them part of herself. In this way, the painting I call the Dominant has absorbed mutations and new ideas, thus renewing and strengthening itself for life everlasting, and remaining the chief means of pictorial expression."





CROSSING into Missouri we drove through the little triangle which would have made Kansas a rectangle, had it not been for the natural borderlines rivers conveniently make in North America—except down East, where the run of the St. Lawrence wasn't followed to include New Brunswick and Nova Scotia in the Union.

The Iowan landscape is livelier than that of Kansas. In Iowa were more houses, more trees, and smaller fields, and the corn seemed higher than anywhere else I had seen it. "Yes," said Peter, "Iowa corn in August is higher than Bearsville corn in June." "Clever!" I said, "but you never saw corn this high in Bearsville at any season."

Sunflowers, small and fat and by the millions grew along the road, as if growing for an Iowa sunflower festival. The yellow heads strutting skyward, several dozen to a plant. Willows in water, and wild flowers in profusion, and pigs rummaging on the banks. A delightful state!

A herd of Hereford cattle stood by a muddy stream all facing the road—front rank dimly reflected in the gray water—pink noses, white faces and brown. Eyes looking pleadingly—

waiting, as if for St. Francis to come and tell them God was satisfied with their endeavor to eat grass. Or waiting, perhaps, for Jan Sieberechts to come and paint them—or for an Iowa painter, for there are many of them.

While I sat in the car on the main street of Clarinda, waiting for the one who had got up late to finish his breakfast, I found it difficult not to consider myself a sybarite with all the directed forenoon activity going on around me. Who but a man of leisure would make the observation that in the gutter below him were lying four empty Copenhagen snuff boxes? I hoped the busy Iowans would think I was making out sales orders as I sat here jotting down notes on their landscape and farms: "Good houses with plenty of gingerbread. Built in a period more prosperous than the present—during the war, perhaps, when wheat was a couple of dollars a bushel, but now lacking paint. The barns have been red once, and are still red in cracks where sun and rain haven't been able to get at them. By their barns shall ye know them—know something anyway. New York State with its well-painted barns looks more prosperous in spite of the black earth they have here. In the William Rochill Nelson Gallery of Art in Kansas City I recognized a New York landscape by the red barns: *Woodstock Barns* by Cikovsky, who also had a *Landscape With A Brook* done in oil."

I had a letter to Francis White in Sioux City and gave it to him. Mr. White used to work in stained glass, but turned to painting and etching. I spent an evening with him and his wife, who is a poet. While Francis White talked their little three-year-old girl to sleep in the next room, Mrs. White and I talked books and things in general. Her language was good and easy to listen to. In her philosophy I saw the family's life dimly reflected, as earlier in the day I had seen the kine.

Mr. White is State Supervisor of the Federal Art Project in Iowa. I met him again at the Art Center, which, like the other F.A.P. Art Centers set up throughout the country, is a free art school and exhibition gallery worked by the community with the assistance of the F.A.P. Mr. White showed me an exhibition of marionette dolls made by the students at the Center, and introduced me to the teacher, Miss Grinewald. Her dolls looked Scandinavian, and like people I used to know.

For communities too small for Art Centers the Project establishes Extension Galleries where art also is taught, and which act as headquarters for outlying rural districts. Country schools are supplied with loan exhibitions and with lecturers on art, and things seem to be humming. With William Morris the Project holds: *"I do not want art for the few, any more than I want education for the few, or freedom for the few."* The Federal Art Project was originated as a relief measure to help artists, but has proved to fill a genuine need for art among the public.

Mr. Bird, State Supervisor for Utah, was there, and asked me to stop at Salt Lake City and see his Project. I regretted having missed it, and that I was going the other way.

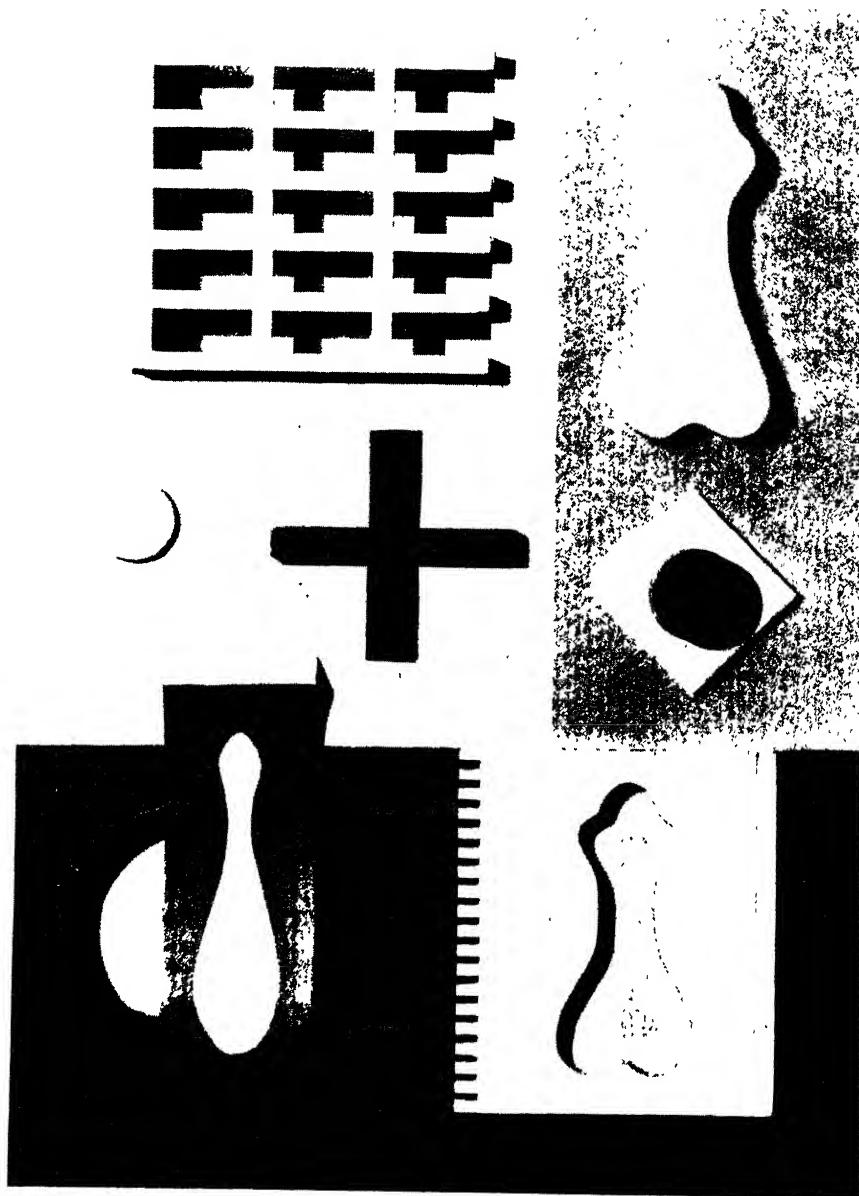
All state supervisors had recently been to Chicago with the National Director, Holger Cahill, to discuss teaching methods at the Art Centers. I don't know what decisions they reached, but the case seems in good hands. I heard a line quoted from John La Farge to show how the present view of artistic expression differs from that of another day: when John La Farge was asked for his opinion on popular art education he said: *"I hesitate to approve of universal art education. It is a light use of time, which comes perilously near to enjoyment."*

That quotation has rankled ever since, for I have tried vainly to devise a context in which it would not be inexcusable.



*Landscape*  
[Oil]

ERNEST FIENE



*Equilibrium*  
[Montage]

KNUD MERRILD



WE DROVE due north into Minnesota, steering, as it were, for the little wart the United States grows into Canada for no other reason, apparently, than to enable Minnesotans to say that their state is the northermost state in the Union, not counting Alaska.

Up there prevail such names as, Lake of the Woods, Pickerel Lake, Little Turtle River, Black Duck Lake, Buffalo Bay, and Rainy River—points of reference, presumably named by men who had no use for mythology.

We arrived at Pipestone, also appropriately named, for here the Indians quarried the stone they used for their pipe heads. I had seen this stone in the east, shipped thither to sculptors. It can be quarried in only small pieces. A few feet square was the biggest I had seen, and but a few inches thick. Its softness, red color, and texture make for a general loveliness I had never seen anything but spoiled, when sculptors dug out of it reliefs the Great Spirit never put into it when, from the flesh of fallen Indians, he made the red Minnesota pipestone. What symbols and figures lie dormant in this stone, He meant for an Indian sculptor to awaken and reveal, but before his race had evolved

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how unpredictable is their reaction to somebody else showing work of theirs which hasn't yet been signed. But apparently Mrs. Dehn didn't know—or else she did. At any rate, I couldn't let a chance like this slip. She brought them in, and I arranged them on tables and chairs and made a one-man show for a one-man audience: a masterful exhibition! And anybody who wishes to see these pictures can do so at his dealer's in New York City.

Adolf Dehn paints on very heavy paper which apparently he soaks before applying his color washes to it. This technique lends itself well to the rendering of wet and juicy states like Minnesota and Louisiana. How it would do for Arizona and New Mexico, I am not prepared to say.

Adolf Dehn's father and mother run a tourist camp by a lake, and we stayed here overnight. In the evening his father told me about his son, and about Minnesota, its resources and its scenery. I listened and wondered when a chance man in Europe would be thus able to praise his country, its beauty, its artists, its produce, without doing it on a background of the imaginary shortcomings of neighboring countries, and without mentioning air force and alliances for the extermination of other peoples. Mr. Dehn spoke of turkeys fed on grasshoppers, chickens fed on milk, snapping turtles, live fish sent in tank cars to New York, Lakeland butter, cheese, iron ore in Duluth, fantastic docks and loading facilities, granite, woods with moose and elk, and lakes where you can hear people talk three miles away.

It was quite a visit, and when we left in the morning, his mother gave us a stirrup cup of three glasses of milk each.

Along route 13 we drove to Minneapolis and called at the Art Institute. In a recent fire I unfortunately lost all the notes I made on art in Minneapolis, but I have here a letter written by somebody to somebody else—and with allowances for a certain

youthful viewpoint, it might give the reader an idea about the art Minneapolis has collected for the edification of her citizens:

“ . . . the art museum is the usual white building stretched out in a park. The collection is small and *pas si chaud*. They have two El Grecos, one X throwing the moneylenders out of the temple, a la Hitler—and very much like the one they have in London. The other is a portrait of a gentleman, and my bet is that El Greco painted neither. They have a Corot, five feet wide by twelve feet high, or something—screamingly lousy! There was a special show of Dürer and Rembrandt prints. There was Rembrandt's X being taken off the cross, and I know now where Freddie K. got that insane contortion of his X's left side and shoulder. Rembrandt has that identical contortion, but better realized, of course. I wonder what the—thought when I criticized it as being cockeyedly out of drawing. What a card he had up his sleeve, and afraid to play it: 'Rembrandt did it!' I fancy it was in here I saw some Bellows, otherwise nothing modern. Playing safe with the old trustees, I guess. A punk show. . . .

“ . . . went into the Walker Gallery where an old square reminding of Kaj K. soaked me ten cents admission and told me Walker had offered the collection to the city, but that the city had rejected the offer—and I'll say Walker didn't catch the city fathers napping that time. Judson Smith was director, the square told me. 'J. S.?' I said, but it wasn't the fire-eater from Woodstock, another one. They had a show of native Minnesota artists. God help them! The collection was sort of fun to look at. There was a tremendous lot of junk. Academic junk—which is more of a pain in the neck than modern junk, when you think of all the good money that has been paid for it. There were third-rate old masters by the truckload, with now and then a surprisingly good picture, three Canalettos full of people in Venetian settings,



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Holbein's *Henry the Eighth*, which I'll swear I've seen somewhere else. A Goya portrait. Several Rembrandts. Millet's *Church* needing a cleaning. Rafts of Murillos and Van Dycks. Somebody told me they had Murillo's Virgin on the crescent moon with cherubim fluttering around her, called *The Little Conception* (the one that didn't take), but I couldn't find it. Hudson River school by the dozen. Some large Davids (Napoleon). One of the two original portraits by Whatshisname, who painted Washingtons for all American museums. Five knock-out Constables oozing British roast beef juice in hideous frames. Several Turners. A lot to look at, and don't let me forget my favorite, *The Battle of Trafalgar* painted by a Frenchman, and boy! do the English get killed in that picture! . . .

"Walker cut down the woods of Minnesota and made a pile of money, they tell me, and to make up for it bought all this junk and tried to go down in history as a patron of the arts. His outfit is working on the California forests now, they say, but the government is keeping an eye on them. . . ."

I too was at the Walker Gallery, but I only recall an elderly Scandinavian-looking gentleman who told me of the great value of the collection. Coming out of the gallery and sitting in my car, I recall, however, being overwhelmed by the heat, or by the thought that today was Sunday and tomorrow Labor Day, and that I had to go to Cold Spring and interview a writer who probably would rather not be interviewed, and then to St. Paul and see a historian who probably would rather not be seen, and by the fact that at the post office was a letter for me containing three hundred dollars which I needed badly, but which I couldn't get until Tuesday.

And as I considered my place on a Standard Oil of Indiana road map of the United States, and thought of five great lakes

full of drinking water not so far to the north of me, I got weary and began imagining myself drifting down the Mississippi and reaching a sea whose water was good only for sailing ships in. And I wrote a letter to the postmaster to forward my mail to Chicago, and I went in and called Peter out from a movie, and I stepped on the starter and laid the car on its first course for Madison, Wisconsin, along the right bank of the Mississippi.

It started to rain. It poured, but on the whole it was a welcome change. We hadn't had rain since we were in the South, where it rained regularly in the afternoon. Up here the rain was on a different schedule: having once started, it rained day and night. Sad weather for the holiday makers. In one town we came through, we saw a parade: little girls dressed in white, sitting drenched and forlorn under umbrellas on the floats. On decorations and streamers the red had run into the white. Through the rain we saw the river, which broadens here and is full of islets and islands. Outlines of everything were blurry, and once more did I endorse the techniques of soaking the paper before rendering Minnesota in watercolor. During let-ups we saw the banks of the Mississippi, which here look like the Hudson River Palisades, and are covered with trees on top. Here and there rocks stuck above the trees in formations resembling just and exactly castles on the Rhine.

We crossed again the Mississippi, which geographically, topographically, and ethnologically is even more of an experience than crossing the Great Divide.



I DON'T know if I should have gone through Wisconsin had it not lain between me and the Chicago painter Aaron Bohrod and some large museums and Federal Art Project headquarters in Illinois, for Wisconsin could barely be seen for rain.

The little sand hills we had encountered in Iowa after the flat stretches of eastern Colorado and Kansas, had been quite a feature in the Iowa landscape. They were stuck together in a manner that reminded of birds that had tucked themselves away on a branch close to one another—if I convey what I mean, which I probably don't—but that impression had been strong, nevertheless. In Minnesota those hills had become larger and more plentiful, and after crossing the Mississippi they completely took possession of the land. We drove among hills that were cultivated as high up as one presumably can drive a horse or a tractor. On their very top they had a small toupee of deciduous trees.

At Madison I put on a necktie, and during a let-up went to call on Professor John S. Curry, Artist in Residence to the University of Wisconsin, but didn't find him home. A friendly teacher of chemistry told me Professor Curry had built himself



*Sunset*  
[Oil]

JOHN S. CURRY



a little studio on the campus, and took me to look at it. It made me wonder what the public thinks of as being a big studio.

On and on we went in southeasterly direction with the windshield wipers going. The rain prevented us from becoming acquainted with the scene, for all that showed of Wisconsin was what appeared in the little sectors kept transparent by the wipers. Observing landscape through the side windows—even from the back seat—is an ability lost to anyone horse-blinkered by driver responsibility over many thousand miles.

When Madison had given out, another town had started, and so it went until at a filling station they told us we were in Chicago.



## ILLINOIS

CHICAGO had made itself felt on the landscape as we approached. Where no houses were, the ground seemed to be lying fallow under the bane of taxes and pending court actions. Big concerns sticking their manicured fingers into the muck pile give you the road sign and the filling station—but here they did no damage to the scenery. They were the only bright spots. Too much absentee ownership, I guessed, for beauty to exist.

We drove through what seemed endless streets of similar impressions. The traffic was thick, but well regulated, and finally we came to the big new post office. With its lack of relation to the surrounding buildings, it made one wonder if it were inaugurating an era where spiritual values might be considered in city planning, to the extent when a traveller wouldn't want to leave a town the moment he enters it.

It was not that the post office had any such human aspect; but as in its newness and whiteness it efficiently seemed to be giving to that necessary evil, Caesar, that which belongs to Caesar—one couldn't help hoping that dwelling houses and streets might be made to give to the spirit, that which the spirit cannot well do without if it is forced to live in a big city.

We put up at a hotel near by, situated on a busy street for whose slummy coziness under an elevated structure I tried to find a noun with a modifying adjective. I finally did: "slummy coziness"—for walking here made one feel strangely like a rat secure among its garbage cans. To one side: bright drugstore and small shop windows displaying their indeseirabilia, and trucks and trolley cars splashing noisily by on the other. From above, the soot-carrying rain sieved through the elevated structure making a wet mess below—and thus was the Chicago environment as I saw it. That I was able to see it, and to some degree enjoy it, was owing to its having been shown me in the paintings of Aaron Bohrod, Fred Biesel, and Gustaf Dalstrom. Even so, without the thought that he would leave it at the end of the book, Dante would not have enjoyed *Inferno*.

I called at the Bohrods' and looked at pictures. Three quarters of an hour in a jangling trolley car had tuned me to appreciation, for Bohrod's canvases were mainly "landscapes," rendering such scenes as I had come by in the uncomfortable, antiquated vehicle that had brought me there. Even his canvases from the country had tin cans and other twentieth-century excreta in them. His pictures did as much for Chicago as art can do: they taught one to see the beauty in rust and decay, and even the humor in ugliness.

If a glue factory sprawling among tenement houses can be made to appear humorous, it is because the artist is able to imply how ugliness is an indication of unfitness to the World's Principle and Purpose—that ugliness is the stamp of impending and justified doom for its bearer. The artist might be able to eradicate ugliness, if he is able truthfully to convey his awareness to a sufficiently large number of people.

And if decay and rust can be beautiful, it is because they are



indications of the grain of the universe: the earth taking to itself again for renewal that which has served its purpose. That a beloved idea has gone distresses the one who, failing to acknowledge the curvature of change, looks along the tangent into what might have been, if lines were straight.

Dust returning to dust—the broken windows and the crazy angles of a disintegrating house become symbols of the Will and the Purpose. A sense of beauty is struck by the implication, a mind interprets it, and artistic ability conveys it in a picture, and to round out the picture in harmonious composition fills in space with empty tin cans and discarded tires—and that which could not be painted, has been painted, because a man came along who could do it.

Aaron Bohrod conducted me through the Art Institute of Chicago, and looked at the pictures with me. When he had gone home I went over them again, dotting down notes at my leisure:

“Above the stairs and most prominently displayed hangs Rousseau’s *Tiger Pouncing on a Water Buffalo*—simple, naïve, and grand! Looking at it, I wonder if it is the cogniscenti’s acclaim that has prevented my natural fondness for such crazy pictures from becoming inhibited by an academic bringing up, or should I have had the courage to enjoy it *malgré lui*?

“Goya’s six little comic-strip canvases of the monk and the brigand hang on one wall in numerical order. In number six the monk ties the bandit, and virtue prevails. But on the wall opposite hangs a similar-sized number seven called *The Hanging of the Monk*, and the uninformed visitor wonders if this is a saving thought on Goya’s part during a new political set-up when values changed and that which had been virtue became vice.

“A roomful of Inness’ landscapes convey not the American scene of last century, but rather the polite romantic outlook

which made rural America resemble rural Middle Europe, as this was rendered in poetry. Good painting job, though.

"Whistler, it would seem, must have had some affiliation with the sea. When he doesn't paint exquisite people in exquisite boudoirs, he etches harbor scenes with a knowledge or an observation that bespeaks a thwarted career on salt water. For these subjects he evinces a tenderness never seen in his oils.

"Arthur B. Davies apparently had a reverence for women bordering on a Caliban complex on his part. I have never seen the nude stated more chastely than in his pictures.

"In a room of modern *AMERICANS* hangs a still life by Cikovsky, which is beautiful, but no more American than is the left bank of the Seine.

"Grant Wood's much reproduced and ingeniously named *American Gothic* is here too. Brittle and dry, it yet convinces the spectator that in the rural Middle West art is up against a Welcome as that radiating from those two faces. Considering the manner in which paint is used on this canvas, as also on some of the canvases of the Texas painters, one wonders if an artist, to reach the fullest and highest in oil, should not take advantage of all the potentialities inherent in that medium.

"Doris Lee's humming and hilarious *Thanksgiving* which took the 1935 Logan Prize, is here. Mrs. Logan's book, *Sanity in Art*, inspired by dislike for Doris Lee's picture, expresses the distress of some, who, looking for art's apotheosis along a tangent emanating from the art exhibition at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, fail to follow the curvature of all change, which also art must follow in order to function as an expression of its time. Having little experience with 'the morbid and the ugly' which they object to in 1935 painting, they demand 1893 World's Fair serenity and status quo reflected in their art.

"Turner stands alone in the history of art. He has here an enormous canvas showing Dutch fishing boats. I like him better with his fogs and luminous vagueness that make his seas boil and surge as in the conch you hold to your ear.

"Latour has a dudish portrait of Manet, which Manet must have loved.

"A roomful of Renoir!

"Boudin here, as in Minneapolis, as everywhere: always in best of taste. The palette of a gentleman of the old school—and a love for ships in port.

"A comprehensive exhibition of Monet's work. Matter-of-fact, almost Manet-ish in his sea pieces (blue boat); and by degrees, as one walks around the room, becoming the misty, sun-filled vagueness we know as Monet: Monet disappearing in luminosity. A lily pond by a bridge is a beautiful thing here, and I imagine that his *Orangerie* paintings, which Clemenceau so praised, are on this order, and not like the over-sweetened things I saw at Durand Ruel's in the twenties—for I like to imagine Clemenceau is as intelligent as I am.

"Good pictures everywhere. Old Director Harshe did a fine job!

"Rembrandt's *Father and Girl in Half-open Door*.

"A Flemish (Albrecht Aldorfer 1480–1538) *Nativity* is one of the earthiest births of Christ I have seen. Mary, so far from looking immaculate, looks like the Whore of Babylon gone Skipper Strasse. Really a grand picture!

"A garden by Van Gogh. Best I've seen. Heavy impasto. Radiating foliage.

"Two rooms of 'Frenchmen' from Forain to Soutine, the latter with a bright yellow plucked chicken on a dark bluish background. A beautiful thing! Fourteenth-century church fathers

would have used it for an altar piece and invented a holy fable about the chicken to justify the act.

"The whole modern academy: Carl Hofer, Segonzac, a Picasso you never would have guessed, Braque, Vlaminck, Matisse, Utrillo (a good one), Dali (figures—I believe—painted from photographs, not so good), and best of all: Derain's *Madame C. Hessling*! Blackish background. Dark red hair. Skin lovely. Shoulders and breast seen through dark lace. A medallion in a black ribbon around the neck. A temptation, not to let oneself be influenced by the Modern Academy! Don't paint, until you can see the white of their eyes no longer!

"In many figure pieces and portraits, particularly in portraits by professional portrait painters, you will find a tendency towards the sure-fire pose: three-quarter face, hands not too prominent, seated, legs crossed, knee-deep, and the rather complimentary light from above—the model put into a formula, the least kind of a problem, a pleasant likeness guaranteed. As over against that, and to learn to appreciate difficult problems solved, look at Eakins. He really seems to have considered the characteristics of the people he painted, and to have made their pose part of their personality.

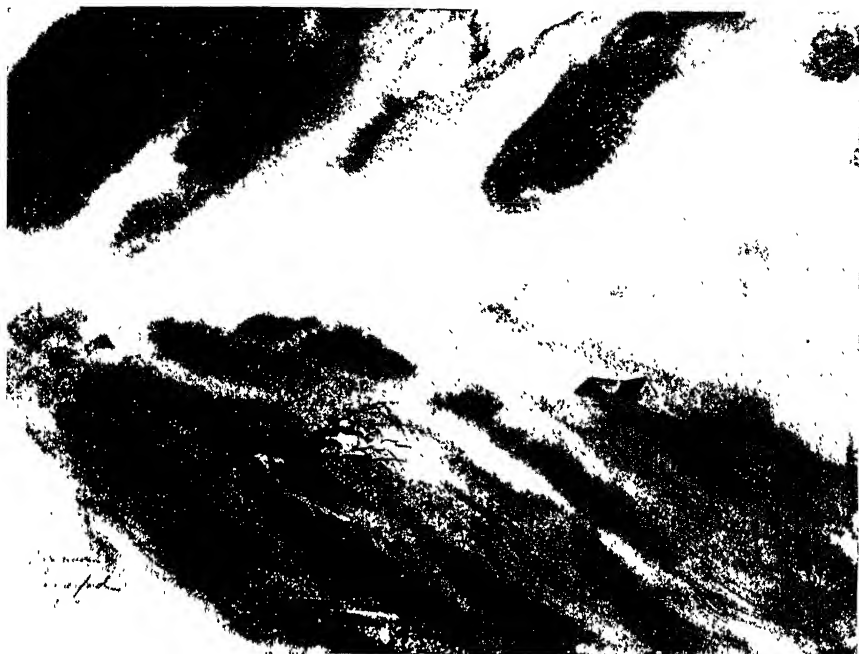
"A good museum well run. Saw Director Rich and argued with him about regionalism in American art."

In the Art Institute of Chicago I saw also a show of Federal Art Project work, "Art for the Public by Chicago Artists," and Aaron Bohrod took me to see the F.A.P. headquarters where the supervisor, Mr. Thorpe, showed me another exhibition of paintings done by project artists. In here I saw no less than four customers buying pictures. The project sells them at the price of the materials gone into their making, and a 24" x 30" framed oil

## ILLINOIS

painting sells for about ten dollars, and a lithograph, framed and glazed, for about three. But don't get your hopes up: so as not to compete with artists not on the project, these pictures are sold only to tax supported institutions, which, by the way, never bought art until the Government started selling it at cost. Private individuals cannot own these pictures. Private individuals can, however, sign the check in payment for it, should they wish to donate a painting or a statue in memory of a friend, to some hospital or school or other public or municipal institution.

I looked at the show and found the painters' environment well reflected in their work, albeit in spots I thought the artists might be put into a more congenial environment, for also decay and dilapidation can be over-emphasized. These men and women on the Federal Art Project are being saved for the country as artists. They are being enabled to work at their chosen metier, and to improve themselves along lines for which they are fitted, at the country's expense. And as one believing in the blossoming of the bush, I don't see how any institution can better justify the barbwire fence of battleships and airplane carriers we are putting up around our garden.



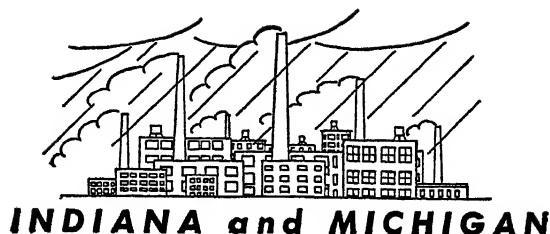
*New England Hurricane*  
[Water color]

VIRGINIA BERRESFORD,



*The Blue Necklace*  
[Oil]

EUGENE SPEICHER



IN COLORADO SPRINGS I had planned our trip as far as Detroit, but on getting ready to leave Chicago I looked at the map once more and thought with distress of visiting another industrial city.

On the wall before me hung Ohman's handsome relief projection of North America, and considering my recent route over it, I felt like a boy having come back to a city school after a vacation in the country.

There, south of the Great Lakes and stretching to the Atlantic, lay the noisy and uninviting region which had provided the escape mechanism on which I had rolled into realms of sunshine and delight; and looking at the country as a whole I couldn't help comparing it to a human body—a beautiful body I had just observed and delighted in. The industrial region below the lakes, in this comparison, were the intestines of the body, the part that digested, and eliminated, and produced the where-withal to make the body function in a twentieth-century manner. To enjoy a dancer, I thought, it should not be necessary to contemplate her lights and liver and alimentary canal, no matter how necessary they might be to her welfare.



## INDIANA AND MICHIGAN

However: spermaceti, they say, gathers in a sick whale—and in like manner have gathered in this region the arts of other regions. Up here are some of the choicest collections of paintings in the country, and in writing a book on the country's art, the writer cannot omit seeing the Detroit Art Institute, the Toledo Museum of Art, the Cleveland Museum of Art, and the Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts. The Cincinnati Art Museum I would forego, having read of the reception given there to my friend Allen Smart.

To the south of Columbus lies Chillicothe, outside which Allen has his R.F.D. When through with the cities, I'd wind up my trip in front of his fireplace and there write *Finis* to these my travels. From Chillicothe we could make a one-day run home: back to school for one, back to the typewriter, the Ledge, and a cheerful "*Q'avez vous vu?*" for the other. This was the bribe I was holding out to myself.

We had to go through Indiana to reach Ann Arbor where I wanted to see the painter Jean Paul Slusser, who is teaching art at the state university, and from him hear about the Michigan landscape and its interpreters. But, as I found, school was out, and Slusser had gone to Woodstock.

We took the shortest route through Indiana I thought would give me enough of an impression of the state to check on an Indiana landscape painting, should I ever see one. It was not until recently, when I met Director Francis Taylor of the Worcester Museum, that I learned about a body of artists known as the Hoosier painters. Had I been so informed when setting out from Chicago, I should have dipped south to Indianapolis and got acquainted with the state through their work.

The trip through Indiana was uneventful—the only feature differentiating this landscape from its neighbors being the white-

painted barns. White is the last kind of paint that should be put on a wooden barn. Except when just built, a barn is always in need of repairs, but seldom gets them. In the meantime white paint shows up the sagging lines and the cracks in a way no color would.

The woman who owned the *TOURIST* in which we stayed, said that the thing to see when visiting Detroit was the Ford rotunda.

I recall my affable: "M-hm!" when she looked up and caught my unguarded expression.

"Which would you rather see of the two," I said to Peter, "the Ford rotunda, or the Detroit Institute of Fine Arts?"

The landlady smiled kindly.

"The rotunda, I think," he said—and we had had our little fun squelching a lot of words between us.

I took him there in the car, and was then guided the fifteen miles to the Art Institute by a hitch-hiker I picked up outside the rotunda, who had been looking for employment at the Ford factories. He told me he was twenty-seven years old, and that he was a graduate of the Michigan State University. He held a chauffeur's license and a transport pilot's license, and showed me both, and said he had been looking for work all summer, since he had come out of the hospital with a crushed finger, which he also showed me, and for which he had got two thousand dollars damages from the factory where he had suffered the accident. In return, and as I identified myself with his age and his needs, I told him of the American landscape, and of people I had seen riding the freights, and who seemed detached from twentieth-century cares, and neither cold nor hungry.

Director Burroughs of the Detroit Institute of Fine Arts was

not in town, and neither was the painter John Carroll, wherefore I had no one to guide me, nor to prejudice me, as I made the tour of the museum's galleries. From my notes I see I was impressed—or depressed—with the air of "We, Us, and Company" that prevailed upstairs and down throughout the building. In a *Creative Art* article on John Carroll I recalled reading that as a teacher, Carroll did all he could to bring out his pupils' individuality, and what he wanted to avoid was to prevent them from becoming "little Carrolls."

Seeing then, in a room, an exhibition of Detroit artists in retrospect, I had to acknowledge that here was an ideal that had not been realized. On one wall hung old Detroit academicians, and facing them was a wall carrying what to me looked like a one-man show. In the center hung Carroll's *The Cowboy's Dream*, a nude sprawling on a large steer, and a d. good picture at that, and flanking it hung the works of Carroll's pupils.

Among the museum's watercolors is one by Virginia Berresford, *Palm trees in Fog*. She also made a watercolor of the 1938 east coast hurricane, which Carl Zigrosser showed me. Although the storm broke twenty of my oaks, I feel, when I see Virginia Berresford's *Hurricane*: "It is an ill wind"—etc.

Four rooms were set aside to modern foreigners: French, Italian, German, and Spanish. Vlaminck had a sea venture that made this spectator long for Vlaminck, his streets. Chirico had a gladiator and a lion, its mouth full of soap. Filippo Pisis and Fausto Pirandello are both very delicate in color, but about the Germans (Karl Schmidt-Rottluff) nothing is delicate. The German paintings here suggested an invasion of Czechoslovakia—or of Paris: German ruthlessness applied to French painting. I missed a genuine German school, something by Otto Dix, or by Josef Achmann.

Upstairs in the museum are four—as if painted on a bet—supersized canvases. One by A. B. Davies (p. tr. d., it says cryptically in my notes), another by Augustus John, one by Alf Particle, and one by Prendergast. The last one looks like an ordinary Prendergast seen through a telescope, where his well-known mosaic-like brush strokes take the size of bricks.

The important thing in this museum are the Rivera frescos covering four walls in a large room. Standing in the middle of it is like standing in the center of an exploding shell. Rivera's ability and vision is a unique occurrence in our day. Looking at his murals here, one can understand how he has knocked a lot of little men sky-high. The frescos represent car manufacturing, abstract and concrete, with birth, the uterus, and the fruits of the earth thrown in. From a balcony on the second floor the tops of the murals can be examined for details. Here and there are some magnificent spots of color. These paintings are overpowering, and fifteen goodly eyefuls for anybody to look at, for one reason or another. They can not, certainly, be settled in a dozen lines of writing about them.

Another thing not to miss when visiting this museum, is the series of frescos by John Carroll in an adjoining room. As later I said to a U.S. Treasury official with whom I was taking five o'clock tea in Washington: "Carroll has courage and humor."

My host pulled back his head and dropped his jaw (a characteristic mannerism of his): "Courage?" he said in English accents, implying surprise. "How? How can Carroll be said to have evinced courage and humor in those frescos?"

"Elementary, my dear X. Any artist painting frescos in a room adjoining the Rivera room must be said to have courage."

"That's your name for it," he said. "And where does the humor come in?"

"In the way the times of day are symbolized," I answered.

"The humor you saw was some you brought with you from the mountains," he observed, and courteously reaching to do so, added: "Do let me make you another ham sandwich."

Carroll's Detroit Art Institute murals fill three lunettes and are named respectively, *Morning*, *Noon*, and *Night*. The lunettes are so designed that to be filled, each with three up-and-down terrestrial or celestial over-life-size beings, certain conventions have to be wrought in the position and shapes of these beings—all of which give them a kind of humor which might have been conscious on the giver's part. This holds particularly true about the lunette carrying the floating horse-of-night. Owing to the downward reach of the lunette's horns the horse's legs hang in under the animal in a manner that causes the spectator involuntarily to make an outward gesture with his elbows in an effort to bend upward the lunette and make the horse gallop.

I drove back to the Ford rotunda and began to look at chromium-plated wonders. The inside of the building was decorated with super-enlarged photographs showing factory activities, and among them were placed, in big stainless steel letters, quotations from some Detroit oracle, such as: "*IT IS INDIVIDUALISM THAT MAKES COÖPERATION WORTH HAVING.*"

Walking on I pondered what that meant, and wondered if it should be understood as: "It is crime that makes a police force worth having," or: "It is soup that makes a spoon worth having." As I looked up again I read: "*IF YOU STABILIZE ANYTHING IT IS APT TO BE THE WRONG THING,*" and applying that to the object of my wonder I asked Peter if he had seen enough, and finding that he had, left Detroit via route 25 which runs along Lake Erie. All the evidence we saw of the lake, however, were frequent advertisements for fish dinners.



WE CAME to Toledo and stopped outside “the most richly endowed art museum in the country.” One-storied, white, and copper-roofed, it was one of the handsomest I had seen. Two of its rooms had been given over to an international exhibition of lithographs, and as far as I could see, the difference between the different nationalities could be told only by their choice of subject matter, and seldom then. Considering the potentialities of this medium, as I have had them pointed out to me by Emil Ganso, Adolph Dehn must be said to have got as much out of the medium as anybody there.

Among the museum’s paintings is a very fine Blakelock: a high and narrow canvas where a problem in equilibrium has been solved by putting a full moon at the top of the picture which shows a tree tracing itself against the sky. Speicher’s *The Blue Necklace* is here. A beautiful piece of work. Throughout the country’s collections, the Speicher pictures impress themselves on the mind as rocks: sound and reliable in the turbulent and often muddy seas of twentieth-century painting.

The museum owns an A. B. Davies called *Redwood Grove* —“the only picture I came across on my trip that made mention

of the giant trees," I said to a Woodstock friend of mine with whom I was discussing A. B. Davies. My friend had just finished laughing at my statement: "I don't know any painter who has approached nude woman with greater reverence than Arthur B. Davies."

"And what has he done to them?" he asked, referring to the trees—and I was obliged to admit he had done nothing to them.

I met the director of the museum, Mr. Blake-More Godwin, in his office where he was talking to two old men, to whom he introduced me: trustees.

It was the first time I had seen a trustee, and took a good look at them. This, then, was what they looked like, the Greeks, the Olympians who decide what is what in art, and whose pictures should be bought! Trustees, like Xerxes' guard, immortal—if one died, another stepped into his shoes.

They were all going to a trustees' luncheon and weren't looking for a good time, when I started telling them stories from my trip. Mr. Godwin, who didn't want to be late, switched me over to his assistant Mr. McLane, who is an authority on Oriental art, and who showed me photographs of some exquisite modern paintings from the autumn salon in Tokyo. Incidentally these photos showed how the influence of Paris has reached Japan also.

On a wall Mr. McLane had worked out an enormous and erudite graphic exposition of the rises and falls of Oriental art throughout history. New excavations enabled him to perfect his curves, which never could be absolutely determined. Japan, which had risen to quality in the sixth century A.D. reached its height of excellence about the year one thousand, from where it then waved downward until, at the very end of last century, its curve, alone of all Orientals, showed a sharp upward trend.



*Dune in November*  
[Oil]

AARON BOHROD





This sudden rise of the arts in a people who left the League of Nations to invade China filled me with resentment, to humor which I reasoned from the photographs I had just been shown: Japanese painting of today, as also Japanese bombers, owe their excellence not to anything intrinsically Japanese, except an ability to imitate Western civilization.

I asked Mr. McLane if it had occurred to anybody to examine the tree rings of the regions represented by his curves, and see if an era of growth and plenty had coincided with a high art expression.

He told me this was being done.

It rained hard and uninterruptedly as following the shore of Lake Erie we drove on to Cleveland and came to the museum after a frightful drive through wet city traffic. But as we arrived the rain stopped miraculously, and the sun shone on a good-looking white building amid trees, outside which sat Rodin's *Thinker* on a stone pedestal contemplating three stepfuls of people who hurriedly had aligned themselves below him to have their picture taken. No sooner had the camera clicked, than God let it rain again. The people dispersed; the *Thinker* shook his head and said something, and I walked into the museum.

I asked for Mr. Milliken, the director, and learned he was in Venice. His assistant was opening a Colonial exhibition somewhere in the city, and Miss Burchfield (sister of B.) wasn't in either, but two other ladies, one after the other, took me in tow through the galleries.

From the informal and pedestrian tone of the above, it will be gathered that I am transcribing from notes written in a car driving through the rain. I shall never forget, though, the two El Grecos they have here, nor the very fine and simple Tinto-

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retto, nor the collection of Tiepolo drawings. But I had come to look for American contemporary landscape work, preferably from Ohio, and preferably for such as might indicate regionalism in terms of which I might see the state when the rain should stop. Such regionalism, according to Mr. Godwin in Toledo, didn't exist, and according to my notes, I didn't find any here. A good Poore I found, and a ditto McFee. A *Skaters on a Pond* by Leon Kroll, also good. A Bellows' *Prize Fight* and sundry Prendergasts less so, and so was (or neither were) the Burchfields they have here, except *White Violets and a Coal Mine*. Perhaps one might see in terms of Burchfield, that which one sees of Ohio through the November rain.

A drive of a hundred and forty miles took us to Columbus, where a surprise was in store for me. For coming into the art museum here, was like coming back into the ten years that began with 1914.

Here hung all, or at least a great many of the paintings I had seen in New York studios, at Stieglitz's 291, and finally as Daniels' Gallery of those years. And with each man's work, as here I saw it again, came a set of memories about him and the crowd and the places we used to frequent. Dostoevsky had recently been translated, and arguments until daybreak were the fashion among us. I think we were growing. And here in Ohio on this day, I saw—as it were—my memories of these years strike a pile of white papers and become written words under the heading: "*THE TURBULENT DECADE*." I thought of the basement of the Metropolitan Museum, where W. M. Fisher presided, Mouquin's at Sixth Avenue, The Whitney Studio Club, the Brevort, Ben and Velida's on twenty-third street, Stieglitz's loft, and sundry docks in Brooklyn where I used to have the fellows

come on board. (Once Marsden Hartley thought I saved his life when he had fallen down between the shipside and the pier.)

It was with a feeling akin to reverence I walked here, for these paintings were evidence of a struggle for freedom from an old tradition. The struggle had been won, and for awhile emancipated American art was the happy and humble adherent of a new tradition emanating from Paris. Yet, today, if I have read the portents correctly, it is becoming a thing indigenous to the soil from which it draws its sustenance.

Here were Hartley, Demuth, Zorach, Preston Dickenson, Spencer, Man Ray, McFee, Marin (twenty-eight in one room!) Sheeler, Dove, Kuniyoshi, Davies, Glackens, Rockwell Kent, Prendergast, Walkowitz, etc. etc.—and all donated to the museum by Mr. Ferdinand Howald.

Mr. Adams, the Assistant Director, took me about. We discussed regionalism, and Mr. Adams told me a strange and fascinating tale about his visiting an Ohio oilcloth factory. It seems the sales (or psychology) department of this concern—which, considering what is involved in dollars and shareholders, can leave nothing to chance and guesswork—had discovered that there is such a thing as regionalism in American oilcloth design appreciation. One design and color combination would sell by the mile in Texas, whereas in Utah it mightn't find one customer, and so on throughout the country. The factory, apparently, doesn't know what lies at the base of this popularity or lack of it, nor is it particularly interested about finding out. It is satisfied to know it is there and to be able to act upon it. Mr. Adams, however, is interested, and I envied him the job he contemplated: from the regions' preferences to see what inferences can be drawn about the regions—and the factory is agreeable to put its accumulated intelligence at his disposal.

Mr. Adams also told me that the museum holds a yearly no-jury exhibition, where any Ohio amateur painter can show a sample of his work against a fee of twenty-five cents. In this manner does this museum manage to convince the public that it is here for the public's sake.

From no pictures I had seen had I gotten an idea of the Ohio landscape. What visual conception I had, was derived from books I had read, and I decided to learn further about the state (where they have more art museums than in any other) by arguing the point with the writer Allen Smart. Accordingly I wired him to send us a thought wave, if he didn't want us.

For a Catskillian to come into Ohio with the pronounced and varied characteristics of Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, and the Middle Western states fresh in his memory, there is nothing to become excited about. He merely feels he is getting nearer home. Ohio with its hills, its lack of evergreens, its large solitary oaks, and its flocks of sheep spread over wide pastures reminded me less of America as I had recently seen it, and more of rural England.

It is, however, undeniably an American landscape. As Allen said when I began discussing it with him: "There is nothing European in the square miles of corn stretching across valleys to wooded hillsides. Or in the ragged pastures with goldenrod and thistles—dam' them! Or in the silos, the big rambling barns in bad condition, the miles of wire-fencing with an occasional relic of rail fences. Or in the muddy streams washing our farms down to the Gulf of Mexico, the shanties and log-cabins of the hills, the big yellow school buses, the cement roads, and the thousand details, not to mention the abominable road advertizing. Also

the misty days of England and northern France are so rare here as to be noticed when we have them."

Before coming to Chillicothe we had run westward to Dayton to look at the art institute. It lies on a hill in a park and looks like none other. To say it looks American is in a way true, as it bears witness to a one-time American tendency to make an important building look as foreign and out of place and time as possible.

At the desk I asked for modern native painters, and was told about a F.A.P. loan exhibition pending. The museum's main collection was one of Oriental art. The few paintings they had were for the most part donated by Mr. John D. Lowe of Dayton, who, regrettably for art, had died last year.

I looked for Ohio painters and found one: Whitmore, who had a good-looking and very green little landscape. I also saw here the first painting I had seen of the Grand Canyon. It was by Blumenschein. The clouds in it looked as if they were the tops of the canyon broken off and drifting upwards as vapors. A problem, that canyon. I believe it gives itself better to writing than to painting, as does Ohio.

It rained as we drove into "Oak Hill," but rain or shine, the old buff-colored, two-storied, sandstone house with its dark red roof, vines, and cream-colored shutters looks lovely. It stands beyond huge lawns (called pastures) on which grow giant tulip trees and oaks, one of which is dead. When at dusk I looked at it against a rainy, reddish sky it became host to a large flock of crows. On that background it reminded me of Russell Limbach's humorous lithograph, *The Crow Tree*, and through that association lost all sinister symbolism.

The mistress of the house was away; the master was keeping

bachelor's hall, tending to his domestic animals, and writing a novel. He was washing vegetables when we came, and collecting a bouquet of flowers from his wife's garden to take to a flower show in Chillicothe. I went with him; it was the first time I had been to a flower show. It hadn't been arranged yet, and the exhibits were standing about haphazardly and gorgeously on floor and tables where they had been put down, making the exhibitors look dowdy.

The splendor of it disoriented me, until I established purpose and order by awarding two first prizes: one for a subject to be done in oil by McFee, and another to be done in watercolor, by some other painter I know. The oil prize went to an old ivory-colored vase full of dried grasses with the red seed-pods of the lantern plant and with brown oak leaves and little blue immortelles stuck in. The watercolor prize I didn't award. The subjects were too overwhelming when seen in terms of the pictures I had in mind. One defiant bouquet of dahlias: white flowers splashed with red; flowers in torment; strange they should have grown and unfolded so gently! Lemon yellow dahlias; a color so clear and pure that there wasn't a shape in the world to carry it, except the dahlia that did. Or a red one! Or a purple one! Or a hellish, great, big, white, and fluted one! A bouquet in itself.

Allen Smart's wife, Peggy, won a blue ribbon on a delphinium she had in the show, and he sent it to her by air mail. A gesture, gentlemen!—the blue ribbon flying through the air from Ohio to Massachusetts "*avec mes félicitations!*"

"Maybe so," I said in answer to what he had just said about the Ohio landscape being American. We were sitting in front of his fireplace and outside it rained. "In Kansas," I went on, "the road runs from horizon to horizon. The traveller stands up in his car and almost wrings his hands at so much straightness. In Ne-

vada it writhes around the mountains uphill and down. Here in Ohio American civilization with its school buses, cement, and advertizing is superimposed on a topography unexciting to one who has just arrived from regions where 'American' applied to the scenery is synonymous with 'exciting'."

Allen suggested next time I come to Ohio I come via Pittsburgh. "For a New Yorker to fully appreciate the landscape immediately west of the Appalachians, he shouldn't come via the Panama Canal, or around the Horn."

"Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio?" I asked. "No painters have featured them as far as I know. No school of landscape painting has evolved taking its sustenance in its own manner from that region."

"I don't know enough about it to say," he answered. "But tell me this, if you can: In so far as art is representational, why do so few artists interest themselves in the *possible* good? Isn't art properly concerned with possibilities? This field of subject matter seems to be left to mediocrities, such as the average illustrator, whose phantasies are invariably cheap.—Why can't there be good phantasy in painting—that is, phantasy rooted in truth and dignity as were the phantasies of Giorgione? There is plenty of grotesque fantasy (with an *f*), especially in prints—but I mean Wishfulfilment of a high order."

I asked: "What is your difference between 'phantasy' and 'fantasy'?"

He said: "By 'fantasy' I mean a work of the imagination presenting the impossible or improbable or unknown more or less realistically. The basic content is *truthful*, and the purpose is to entertain, or illumine, or reform. Voltaire and Swift in literature, or Lewis Carroll, or Gilbert and Sullivan had 'fantasy.' So had Hogarth and Daumier, and Goya in his war etchings. Today we



have many fantasies in paint and print, and some good ones. One *Metropolitan Movie* is worth a cartload of the ordinary Social Scene boys.

"By 'phantasy' I mean a work of the imagination," he went on, "presenting the *desired* more or less realistically. Is a demand for the heroic or the ideal necessarily adolescent?"

I said, "Well, now, I'll tell you: I think you are asking for a hell of a lot. You are asking for about all that art can give. Whenever a painter rushes in to do the heroic, or the ideal, or the desired, you have *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, or *The Isle of the Dead*, or *The Doctor*, or *September Morn.* There it is, more or less realistically rendered—and does it make you squirm? It takes an excessive lot of what-it-takes to make a 'heroic' or 'ideal' picture of the 'desired' into a work of art. Far as I have travelled, and much as I have seen, I am but able to say that only twice have I come across a picture of which I could say that here the desired, the ideal, the heroic—as I see it—had been expressed realistically. Once in the Glyptothek in Copenhagen: Delacroix's painting, Mirabeau telling De Brézé '*Allez dire a votre maitre . . .*' And again in the Phillips Memorial Collection in Washington: Daumier's *The Sculptor*, where man is shown as God intended him. In those canvases painting technique has been subordinated to the presentation of an idea that has nothing to do with paint.

"As over against those, take a painter like Kuniyoshi. He has digested the whole modern French school. He is able to make into a work of art the most trivial subject: a floor, a wall, a table top. Deliberately he seems to choose the most unlikely ones, but his subjects and what he makes of them have the approval of the critics and his fellow artists—not to mention the collectors. From among those three, painting receives its direction—we

won't go into where *they* get it—and I feel fairly safe in saying that all three shy clear of the heroic, the ideal, and the desired, as they would the plague. Why, dam' it, how can they help it? They are our sophisticates. They don't want Paris to accuse them of adolescence."

Allen said: "I don't know if it is my poor choice of language that possibly could have led you to think I implied admiration for the four outrages that you mentioned. The stylizing process I had in mind picks out attractive truths as in Greek sculpture, or imagines attractive possibilities or impossibilities as Daumier probably did in *The Sculptor*. Of the first kind, picking out attractive truths, there are plenty of painters doing it today. I am thinking of Sheeler, whom I admire. Of the second kind of phantastist, imagining attractive possibilities or impossibilities, there are few good ones, either because their technique is slick, or the 'desired' cheap stuff, or both. Is day-dreaming in paint necessarily so immature a process that it is left to mediocre painters? In this day and age why do none of the Social Scene boys, for instance, imagine *good* cities, farms, picnics, games, men, women, children happily at work and play?"

"Some do," I said. "When logic demands the use of symbols, simple and broad in appeal. But that does not necessarily make good art. Certain of our landscape painters come closer to it than anybody. But as far as 'representation' goes, I am satisfied if a painter enables me to see the beauty of some unorganized cross-section of nature, after he has organized it on his canvas. With his motivation in mind, I can get the significance of a landscape, which otherwise I should see only as my own kodak eyes reveal it to me."

"Enables you to see beauty? But in some respects this makes art a devitalizing and un-nerving influence, insofar as by mak-

ing us see them as beautiful, it eliminates our distaste for ugly buildings and people, broken down machinery, and so on. There are some hideous old houses here in Chillicothe that we now enjoy, and should miss if they were torn down, simply because we see them as 'Burchfields.' Then there is Georgina's water-color, *Journey's End*, where an old boat and an old car lie rusting together at the water's edge. That picture tends to make one enjoy wrecked cars and boats. Of course, this is good, insofar as nothing can be done about the waste of our civilization—but doesn't it make us rationalize, hoping-thinking that nothing can be done about such things? In some more subtle fashion, art actually paralyzes me as a man of action."

I didn't argue that last point. I recognized it for a wish-dream threat. If a rusty car were lying on Oak Hill's lawn, I doubt that the painter exists who, by making a no matter how beautiful picture of it, could cause Allen to let it remain there. "Disintegration is a manifestation of the World's Will," I said, "and as such it is beautiful. The artist who makes a picture of a disintegrating barn tacitly admits of its life curve: when it was built, its right angles and straight lines expressed a purpose, which, of course, was not eternal. At the end of its cycle and following the grain of the universe, it returns to the earth from which it was taken. That process is along the grain, and—if you look away from the farmer's economy—beautiful. It is only when disintegration interferes with an expression of—say—repose or economy that it is ugly, as for instance if a wrecked car were lying on your front lawn."

"Should art's function, according to you, then be to point out the beautiful that it might be maintained, and the ugly that it might be eliminated?"

"I don't want to prescribe for art—and I certainly wouldn't

limit it to anything as pragmatic as that. Furthermore, 'beautiful' and 'ugly' are relative adjectives to us concerned with survival among the nouns they modify. Absolutes might be discerned by a detached observer sitting on the moon, perceiving the Grain as it is revealed on the earth. I am not sure art's function can be defined. I do not, certainly, agree with Helen Parkhurst who claims art function is to *'echo in its own terms the universal conflict between order and disorder, as this conflict pervades the entire universe.'* Show me the disorder in the universe! Wherever I look, whether into the starry sky, or into an atom, or simply at the surrounding landscape, I see the image of a great order, and of One Will forming matter into the large coherence my awareness reveals to me as the universe.

"Any flurry of apparent disorder will be owing to matter's endeavor to unify itself and to establish a new equilibrium, as the Germans in Central Europe—or to bring an individual idea to fulfilment and in conjunction with the universal idea, as when the wolf eats the lamb. To the lamb, or to anyone identifying himself with the lamb-idea, it is a case of disorder, cruelty, and frustration. To the wolf it is order, beauty, and fulfilment. To the universal idea manifest in the survivor, it is an orderly conflict between two of its orders, and a conflict art might well echo, as art might echo the orderly conflict between growth and gravity expressing itself in a tree or in any other thing reaching for its zenith because along that line it can defy gravity the best. And the outcome of the struggle is equilibrium, which is another of beauty's manifestations."

"If the lamb is mine," objected Allen, "this gazing from the moon is a luxury indeed."

(I was at that moment reminded of an incident: at the Art Center of Bryn Mawr I had been telling an audience the above,

when the professor of history from the college faculty, Dr. Gray, said, "You are monistic, eh? Well, William James threw some monkey-wrenches into *that* machinery with *quite* some effect. How about the war in Spain, with your observer on the moon? The dualists have something to say, too!"

I too had something to say, but it was after my "talk" and I had to shake hands with somebody, and lost Dr. Gray. But his objections hadn't been without effect on me. All next day I thought of what I might have answered.)

"Perhaps you think this is a monistic point of view," I now said to Allen. "If you do, and on that account reject it, I shall ask you to define the dual and opposing forces in as concise terms as you would employ in differentiating between totalitarianism and democracy. If you can't do it, I shall call your claim for dualism a wish-dream to solve the sad lamb-and-wolf puzzle. But that, mind you, is no puzzle to the monist. He concludes from watching the struggle for existence, that the Will to Live is too large for the amount of matter made available to its expression. Or speaking Æsopian language to keep the picture simple: when the Creator turned Evolutor and wanted to improve and diversify His model, He made it too complex for continued peace on earth. His creatures could no longer sustain themselves on inorganic sun, water, and earth. They needed pre-digested chemicals. And as the species were given no ten commandments, nor a sense of coöperation, each took his sustenance where he found it, even if it robbed another Will-to-Live of its habitat. But mark you, they are not opposing forces. They are competing. When you see two regiments rushing at each other in no-man's-land, and think you are looking at opposing forces, remember you are leaving out of consideration that universal dimension along

which head-on collisions become side-swipings. Remember, all is going the same way along the same crowded road."

"I am not sure of the words," said Allen, "but I think I am a monist about the universe and a pluralist about man, in that he has to have as many attitudes and rôles as an actor. He has to know when and how to be an artist and gazer from the moon, and when and how to be shepherd. Sometimes he has to be both at once, if he can."

I said: "Have you ever imagined what a peaceful place the earth would be, if instead of splitting life into millions of beings, the Creator had laid it as a unit into a homogeneous jelly covering the entire globe? Can you see it lie there? A gentle, wise, and humorous jelly? A conscious jelly. Conscious of day and night at the same time. Appreciating the seconds of twenty-four hours pricking its awareness along its equator in one tick of the clock. Smiling at the order in the universe, and whapping tidely up and down under the changing phases of the moon."

In the autumn, there are the rich reds, browns, and blacks of the woods and fields, the blue-gray of the hills, and the rather melodramatic effect of the autumn sky. There is also the rich green of the winter wheat, like a carpet beneath the fading shocks of corn-fodder, with thousands of little piles of corn, pure gold, that have been husked, but not hauled in. In the garden the weed-piles are smoking slowly, and woodpeckers rattle the seed-pods of the yuccas.

That is an Ohio fall landscape from Allen's *R.F.D.*

It was Sunday morning, and the day set for our departure. In the evening we should be home. It was early yet, and I had come through a wet apple orchard and reached a point where the earth sloped away and formed an extensive valley full of fields and farms and clumps of woods. The rain had stopped

during the night, and the day had opened clear. It was still summer, and the colors were green and yellow. The sky was pale blue with the white clouds common to eastern states.

I sat down on an old fence rail and looked at it.

"Art's function," I thought, "might be what Phidias did, when—chiseling away the marble that obscured his vision within the block—he eliminated non-essentials."

Gazing at the landscape I was aware of the earth being on its way—as I was—to its winterquarters, as here on the northern hemisphere we call that part of its orbit. I had been up since daybreak and seen Orion rise. A fellow I once knew thought what a cheerful sight it must be south of the equator, where 'it forebodes summer.

I gazed at the valley. The landscape was very still—I imagined it glowing in Indian Summer.

"Dictionaries and encyclopedias weave garlands of words around the concept 'Beauty,' but bring the seeker no nearer to an understanding of it. Writers and philosophers become nebulous when they touch it, and make statements too vague to quarrel with, as Santayana's: *'Beauty is pleasure objectified.'*

"Inquiring into the idea 'Beauty' and trying to define it, and trying to account for its presence in matter, it might be helpful to consider matter's smallest item, the particles that constitute the atom. It would seem, then, that all conflicts to the contrary, these particles all are under orders from One will, and are forever taking their place to shape and reshape matter into that harmonious whole our five senses recognize as Creation, and which—to our perception—is everlasting. But to be eternal, Creation must be stable. It must be and remain so—rhythmic, balanced, healthy—all of which are synonymous with 'beautiful.' To maintain itself Creation must remain beautiful.

"I submit, then, that Beauty might be defined as the evidence of the principle made manifest in, and maintaining the universe throughout its vastness and through its tiniest particle.

"The will in matter to follow and to express One idea, we might conveniently call the Creator's will; and man's ability to recognize it as such, and to recognize the earmarks of the Principle, is his sense of beauty. This sense tells him good from bad, and that he is able to tell it even when it is not *his* good and bad, is owing to his imagination.

"The thrill we feel when laboriously we have made a leaning thing straight and stabilized it there, is because, in securing its center of gravity above its support, we have established enduring balance, which is a sign of the universal Will. The thrill we feel is our joy in having conformed to that Will, or, if we are but spectators, from seeing that Will be done."

"Hm," said Allen when I had read it to him. "The Will is seldom that clear to me. When did you write it?"

"This morning, while you were milking. I sat on a fence rail and looked down your valley, thinking of the Ohio Indian summer—when in the gardens the weed-piles are smoking slowly, and the woodpeckers rattle the seed-pods of the yuccas."





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